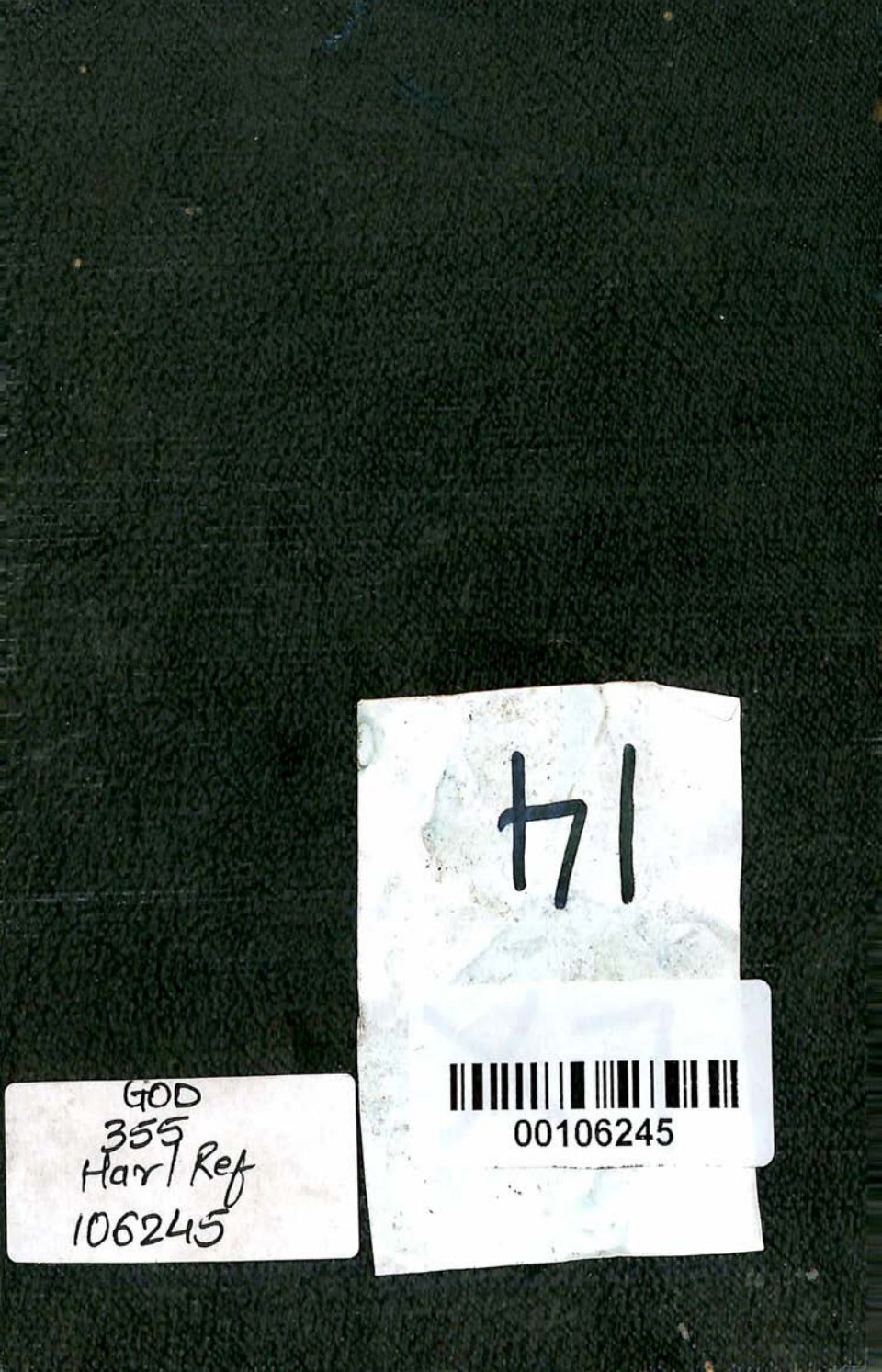
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REFLECTIONS

ON

THE ART OF WAR.

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REFLECTIONS

ON

THE ART OF WAR.

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BY

MAJOR-GENERAL

SIR REGINALD CLARE HART, V.C., K.C.B.,

COMMANDING A FIRST-CLASS DISTRICT IN INDIA.

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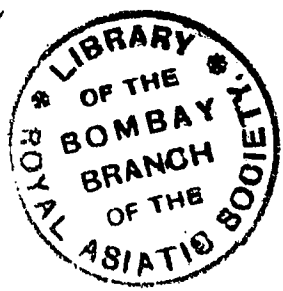

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THIRD EDITION.

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"Peace," says Ségur, "is the dream of the wise; war is the history of man."

"But such an art is war! So fearful is the consequence of error, so terrible the responsibility of a general. Strongly and wisely did Napoleon speak when he told Joseph he must give himself up entirely to the business, labouring day and night, thinking of nothing else."—NAPIER.

"When I first applied myself to the writing of these Lives," says Plutarch, "it was for the sake of others; but I pursue that study for my own sake, availing myself of history as of a mirror, from which I learn to adjust and regulate my own conduct. For it is like living and conversing with these illustrious men, when I invite, as it were, and receive them, one after another, under my roof; when I consider how great and wonderful they were, and select from their actions the most memorable and glorious."

"Ye Gods! what greater pleasure? what happier road to virtue?"

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,

TO

HIS EXCELLENCY

GENERAL SIR GEORGE STEWART WHITE,

V.C., G.C.B., G.C.I.E.,

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA.

PREFACE.

THESE "Reflections" are little more than a compilation of notes made for my own instruction.

The Art of War has, since the days of Hannibal and Cæsar and their historians, had many and able exponents. Yet it is an Art so many-sided, so susceptible of infinite modifications, according to time, place, and circumstance, and, above all, according to the capacity and temperament of those who conduct it, that fresh contributions to its study may be perhaps still permitted, on the score that amidst a great deal of what must be to the military student more or less familiar and well-worn ground, there may occur here and there a useful suggestion, a novel interpretation, or a more emphatic view. I have not translated the French quotations, because the original always loses in translation, and in the present day British officers are, as a rule, sufficiently acquainted with the language to read it easily.*

If in the perusal of these pages my brother officers, and others, find something to encourage them to extend their reading, and to aid them in their study of the Art of War—something which may be of use to them hereafter, whenever they have to put their knowledge into practice; something which will give them greater confidence in themselves;—then my aim in venturing to publish these "Reflections" will be accomplished.

R. C. H.

August 31, 1894.

* Translated in Second Edition.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE numerous favourable reviews of the first edition of this book, and the encouraging notice that has been taken of it by officers whose opinions carry weight, have induced me to venture upon a new and greatly enlarged edition which, with its detailed index, will, I trust, be found useful to officers studying the art of war, and to all who require a work of reference to incidents connected with the great battles of ancient and modern times, and with the generals—good and bad—who have left their names in history.

By dwelling on the characteristics of many of the greatest commanders of all ages, I have endeavoured to make the first chapter an interesting introduction to the study of war. A certain familiarity with the characters of those who have been leaders of men in battle is absolutely essential to the right understanding of military operations. This preliminary study will assist and fortify the reader, because the acts and sayings of the men who have actually made history are everywhere brought forward by me as credible evidence in support of what I urge as sound teaching of the art of war.

A separate chapter on savage, mountain, or jungle warfare has been suggested to me, but is not given, because the principles are the same in all kinds of warfare. But there is this to be noted, that in mountain or in jungle warfare the

difficulty of exercising command is greatly increased, for so little can come under the direct observation of the commander; and the operations are necessarily so dislocated that much reliance must be placed on the intelligence, training, knowledge of war and brave leading of subordinate officers. In every case, the circumstances and the conditions are so different, and a knowledge of the nature of the country, and of the peculiar customs, and tactics of the enemy is so necessary, that all officers must fall back upon their own intelligence and common sense, and upon their acquaintance with general principles and with human nature. As Frederick the Great truly says, "The rules that one has to observe on a day of battle are the same that must be applied in small actions between detachments." *

Besides, if there are two or three ways of solving a tactical problem in an ordinary country, there are probably double as many ways when the theatre of war is the mountains of Northern India, the dense bush of West Africa, or the jungles of Burmah; where stratagems and clever expedients play a most prominent part; and where the chief difficulties are connected with supply, transport, and climate. "To give specific precepts," says Jomini, "for complications—which vary infinitely with localities, the resources and the condition of the people and armies—would be absurd. History well-studied and understood is the best school for this kind of warfare." † I would venture, however, to enunciate one precept for this kind of warfare:—*The enemy should be brought to battle as soon as possible, and, within limits, much more may be risked than in civilized warfare.*

In irregular warfare, the Fabian method is the right policy only for the ill-organized enemy who, if they are wise, will

* "Instructions pour ses généraux," Art. xxii.

† "Art of War," p. 169.

avoid anything like a general engagement, and trust to climate and transport difficulties to weary and wear down their opponents.

Many works on the art of war appear to me to be extremely pedantic, dry, and uninteresting. The art of war has its principles, and its rules based on those principles; but probably the best way to teach them is not to ask people to accept them as abstract facts; but rather to interest, to arrest attention, and encourage study, by giving examples from history to illustrate each rule and principle. In this way officers may, almost without knowing it, gradually acquire a knowledge of the theory of war, and cultivate a taste for military literature.

I have tried to write simply and clearly, but I do not pretend that a thorough knowledge of war, or a sound military judgment, can be acquired without laborious study and reflection; nor can I hold out the prospect of any finality—that is to say, an officer who aspires to be a distinguished commander, whatever his rank and experience, must never rest satisfied that he has nothing more to learn.

R. C. H.

October 1, 1897.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

A CHAPTER on Mountain Warfare has been added to this edition.

R. C. H.

October, 1901.

REFLECTIONS

ON

THE ART OF WAR.

THE HIGH QUALIFICATIONS OF GREAT GENERALS.

SÉGUR informs us that just before the battle of Borodino, Napoleon uttered these words: "What is war? A barbarous trade, in which the only art consists in being the strongest at a given point!" This is surely common sense, and at first sight seems to indicate an art so simple, that even those who have no concern in military operations do not hesitate to criticize them, and find the occupation easy, because they rarely realize the truth of Clausewitz's saying that, although everything in war is simple, what is simple is difficult.

Yet, if the whole art of war is so simple, how is it that History tells us of but few generals who were really masters of the art? Do not successive campaigns and—to compare small things with great—successive camps of exercise afford us examples, rather of conspicuous failures than of notable successes, among commanders great and small? And, if the game of war is governed by one fundamental principle, as Napoleon has stated, how is it that so many commanders have failed to

play it at all successfully? The answer is known to those who perceive the vast difference between the theory of war —simple to expound, easy to understand—and its practice, complicated in a hundred essential details, and difficult to direct. This gulf that separates the simple theory from the difficult practice can be crossed only by men of rare qualities—men, too, who must be in touch and in sympathy with human nature which is so easily affected, so weak and yet so strong; so readily elated, and yet so quickly depressed.

Frederick considered that the proportion of men fit to command, even a small detachment, in war was far smaller than was generally supposed.*

It is proposed, in this chapter, to consider the moral and the physical qualities which, in different degrees and in various combinations, govern the actions of all great men; and frequent references to the words, the actions, and the characteristics of distinguished soldiers will help us to understand why so few attain to real greatness.

It is not pretended that the qualifications for high command can be arranged in a precise order of merit; nor is it to be supposed that any man has ever possessed, in perfection, all the indications of greatness. Indeed, most great generals have had some serious defect in character, neutralized, however, by some still greater virtue. Yet men whose names stand out as landmarks in the military history of the world—men like Alexander, Hannibal, Scipio, Cæsar, Frederick, and Napoleon—have certainly possessed most of the characteristics of greatness in a remarkable degree; while others, capable and brilliant in many respects, men like Ney and Murat, fell short of real greatness through lack of some essential quality. There were flaws in their characters, and a certain meanness blended with their virtues.

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiv.

"As I understand the genius possessed by the Marlboroughs and Napoleons of all ages," says Lord Wolseley, "it is composed of a greater variety of talents, and of natural gifts, than that which has made men great and renowned in any other walk of life." *

Napoleon said: "It is rare and difficult to find in one man all the qualities necessary for a great general. What is most desirable, and immediately brings any one to the front, is, that the understanding and the attainments be in equilibrium with the character and the courage. If his courage is much superior to his attainments, a general attempts what is beyond his capacity; and, on the contrary, if his character and courage remain below his intelligence, he does not dare carry out his plans." † Lord Wolseley, referring to Lord Grey at Sedgemoor, says: "There are men who can plan operations which they do not possess the courage to carry out, who will even attempt to carry them out up to the last awful moment, when, their hearts failing them, they actually take to their heels." ‡ Napoleon III. had the talent to make plans, but not the force of character to execute them. In the great Napoleon we have a perfect example of a man whose intelligence and talents were in equilibrium with his character and courage. Writing to the Directory in 1797, he said, "What you desire that I should do are miracles, and I do not know how to do them. It is only with prudence, wisdom, and much skill that one succeeds in great enterprises, and surmounts all obstacles; otherwise one will succeed in nothing." §

"The element in which the operations of war are carried on," says Clausewitz, "is danger; and which of all the moral

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius."
† Las Cases, i. p. 247.
‡ *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Courage."
§ Correspondance de Napoléon I., iii. p. 369.

qualities is the first in danger? *Courage.*" He next places *health*, because war is the province of physical exertion and suffering. Then comes *intelligence*, because "war is the province of uncertainty: three-fourths of those things upon which action in war must be calculated, are hidden more or less in the clouds of great uncertainty. A common understanding may, at one time, hit upon the truth by accident; an extraordinary courage may, at another time, compensate for the want of intelligence; but in the majority of cases, errors in judgment are the result of deficient understanding. Boldness, directed by an overruling intelligence, is the stamp of the hero."*

We have high authority for heading the list of qualifications with *physical courage and moral courage*, bracketed. The possession of the one quality without the other is, however, by no means rare. For subordinate commanders physical courage should perhaps stand first.

Napoleon said, "Order Murat to attack and destroy four or five thousand men in such a direction, it was done in a moment; but leave him to himself, he was an *idiot* without judgment. I cannot conceive how so brave a man could be so *cowardly*. He was nowhere brave unless before the enemy. *There* he was probably the bravest man in the world. . . . He was a paladin, in fact a Don Quixote in the field; but take him into the Cabinet, he was without judgment or decision."† He also wrote to his sister Caroline, "Murat is a very brave man on the field of battle, but he is more feeble than a woman, or than a monk, when he is not in presence of the enemy; he has no moral courage."‡

* Clausewitz, pp. 10, 25, and 98.

† O'Meara, ii. p. 134. In defence of Murat, see p. 18.

‡ "Napoléon Intime," pp. 331, 332. He wrote in a similar strain to Eugène.

Plutarch relates that the Roman general Marius, in civil affairs, was timid in debate; the intrepid firmness which he displayed in battle forsook him then, and the least breath of praise or dislike disconcerted him in his speech, and deprived him of his presence of mind.

In conversation at St. Helena, Napoleon said, on the subject of physical courage, "That it was impossible for Murat or Ney not to be brave; but that no one had less sense, the former especially.

"As to moral courage, he had found it very rare, that of two-o'clock-in-the-morning—that is to say, that sort of courage in cold blood which, in spite of the most sudden and unexpected events, keeps the mind free to form a calm judgment and a right decision. He did not hesitate to say that he himself possessed this two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage, in a conspicuous degree, and that he had seen very few men who were not much inferior to himself in this respect.

"Speaking of military ardour and of courage, the emperor said, 'There is not one of my generals whose flotation, so to speak, I have not gauged. Some can be trusted up to the waist, others up to the chin, and, finally, some even to the crown of the head, but the number of the last is very small, I can assure you.'" *

Marshal Saxe wrote, "I have my own idea of what a general should be, and it is not fanciful, because I have seen such men. The first of all qualities is valour, without which I take little account of other virtues, because they may then become useless. The second is intelligence; he should be courageous and fertile in resources. The third is health."† The marshal, himself, by his strength of mind, bore up against ill-health and acute suffering.‡

* Las Cases, i. pp. 217, 218.

† "Mes Rêveries."

‡ See p. 41.

Some men are quite deprived of their senses by extreme danger or responsibility; and they, no matter what their other qualifications, are less fit to command than those whose personal courage is their only redeeming quality. But courage without intelligence, discernment, or judgment may produce the most serious consequences. "When great personal courage is united to high intelligence, then the commander must naturally be nearest to perfection."* "I think it safe to conclude," says Jomini, "that the best means of organising the command of an army, in default of a general approved by experience, is to give the command to a man of tried bravery, and to assign to him a chief of the staff of high ability and faithful character."† And again, "The first of all requisites for a man's success as a leader is, that he be perfectly brave. When a general is animated by a truly martial spirit and can communicate it to his soldiers, he may commit faults, but he will gain victories and secure deserved laurels."‡

"Clive had shown that he possessed, in its fullest extent, that most striking of all human qualities—true valour. He had rendered himself conspicuous by volunteering for all services of danger, and by exhibiting in them a rare combination of daring courage, sound judgment, quickness of apprehension and readiness of resource. His insensibility to danger, and his reckless courage, exerted such magic influence over the native troops, that they were ready to follow him in the most desperate enterprises. His men believed that wherever he went glory and victory followed; throughout India he was known as Sabat Jung (daring in war)."§

Writing of Auerstädt, Napoleon stated that Davoust "had displayed remarkable courage and great firmness of character,

* Clausewitz iii. p. 171.
† "Art of War," p. 59.
‡ "Art of War," p. 345.
§ Wilson.

the first qualities in a soldier." * "Military genius," said Napoleon, "is a gift from heaven, but the quality the most essential in a general-in-chief is firmness of character and resolution to conquer at any price." † Themistocles, as described by Plutarch, was a man of the most extraordinary force of character. Lord Wolseley says of Lee: "No man has ever fought an up-hill and a losing game with greater firmness." "Men should be firm in heart and in purpose, or they should have nothing to do with war or government." ‡

It would be impossible to name a great leader who had not been distinguished by personal courage. The biographies of of all great commanders teach us that whenever occasion demanded it, they were always at the post of greatest peril. From the nature of the case, a man wanting in personal courage could not be a great leader, because he never would lead at those critical times when his leading is necessary, and, consequently, he would never acquire that moral and magic ascendancy over the minds of his men which would enable him to snatch victory at a critical moment.

We next note as important in the highest degree: *A warlike spirit; physical strength, energy, and vigour.*—With advancing years, these qualities are on the wane. Old age loves repose.

Mental power, energy, and vigour.—In these respects, Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Marlborough, and Napoleon were pre-eminent. "Marlborough," says Lord Wolseley, "was as untiring in energy and perseverance as was Napoleon in all that he undertook."

Men seldom rise to chief command unless noted in their

* Bulletin, 15th Oct., 1806.

† "Pensées de Napoléon," 50.

‡ Bourrienne. For examples of men who were not so, see the references to Burnside and Frossard at pp. 127, 215.

early career for courage and decision. Then, why is it that such men in independent command are so generally found to lack both decision and boldness? Take Ney and Grouchy in the Waterloo campaign as examples. The reason that courage and resolution are so rarely to be found in the commander-in-chief is that, in supreme command, a far higher appeal is made to the mental powers, the judgment, and the intelligence. Those men who are bold and resolute in a subordinate position frequently lack the high mental and intellectual qualities necessary to guide the judgment to a calm, bold, prompt, and resolute decision regarding a military operation when so much is necessarily based on mere conjecture; and when danger, conflicting ideas, and impressions of anything but an encouraging tendency, confuse the brain of the ordinary man. Such men feel painfully the weight of responsibility; they vacillate and waste the precious time, and finally are lost. All this accounts for the extraordinary inaction of brave and distinguished soldiers like Ney and Grouchy.

In the field, a general cannot see everything with his own eyes, he has to exert the faculty of mental vision, which requires mental qualities. "I believe," says Lord Wolseley, "that there is a great deal of nonsense talked about strategical and tactical knowledge being everything, to the exclusion of capacity on the part of a general for drawing from mere indications the inference of where the enemy is, what he is doing, and what he intends to do." * Sometimes both the opposing generals have been in a complete fog, neither one knowing the dispositions nor the strength of the other—then we have had haphazard battles like Hohenlinden and Spicheren.

Resolution, and determination, never degenerating into obstinacy. —According to Clausewitz, resolution is courage in face of

* See pp. 15, 29.

responsibility. The ablest men are often devoid of resolution. "Resolution removes the torments of doubt and the dangers of delay." Many men can show resolution in a subordinate position, but are vacillating when there is no one to share the responsibility of a possibly false step. Resolution should not be confounded with unreflecting haste. A wise resolution requires coolness, intelligence, judgment, and courage. A hasty unreflecting decision requires only courage.

"At the battles of Ratisbon and Wagram, Napoleon attacked with his right wing, standing on the defensive with the left. The Archduke Charles did the same. But the one did it with full resolution and energy, the other was undecided, and stopped always half way. The successes gained by that portion of the Archduke's army which was victorious were unimportant; those which Napoleon gained in the same time in the opposite direction were decisive." *

Marius and Cæsar were commanders of inflexible resolution. There is no more brilliant example of perseverance than Frederick throughout the Seven Years' War. After the failure of the French at Aspern and Essling, and the loss of their bridge, the situation, from a military and political point of view, was very critical, but Napoleon showed his characteristic resolution in holding his ground, improving his position on the island of Lobau, and in concentrating his troops on this distant but decisive point in the theatre of war. Wellington displayed courage, resolution, and determination of the highest order when he stood to fight at Waterloo. On the other hand, on the 17th and 18th June, Grouchy showed no resolution or force of character, but he was probably obstinate in his determination when he refused to march on Waterloo when urged by Gerard.

The operations that led to the Battle of Prague, in 1757,

* Clausewitz, vol. iii. p. 100.

and of Königgrätz, in 1866, are examples of success notwithstanding being based on faulty plans, because the movements were carried out with *decision, vigour, and resolution*, whereas the defeated generals, not possessing these qualities, awaited events, instead of taking the initiative and profiting by the errors of their opponents. Wellington and Blucher, in 1815, were successful in spite of great errors, because they displayed extraordinary *resolution.*

The general who leans on a council of war is generally weak in character and unfit for supreme command. Let us see what Napoleon says about this: "By dint of discussing, consulting oracles of wisdom, and councils of war, there will happen what has happened in all ages through following the same course: one ends by taking the worst advice which, nearly always in war, is the most timid, or, if you prefer it, the most prudent. But the true wisdom of a general is found in an energetic resolution." * Prince Eugène, Villars, and Frederick were all of the same opinion that councils of war are only useful for generals who want an excuse for doing nothing. † Marshal Villars nearly always acted against the advice of his generals, and he was nearly always successful. So true is it that a general who feels himself strong enough to command an army, ought to follow his own inspirations, if he wishes to be successful. ‡

Councils of war have frequently been assembled at critical times, but these were the very times when there should have been no such evident indication of vacillation, because salvation was dependent on energetic and decided action. To call a council of war is an ignoble attempt to shift the burden of responsibility on to the shoulders of subordinates, and is often a mere pretext to find an excuse for such flinching as the inner

* "Maximes de Guerre," lxv.
† "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxv.
‡ "Notes des Maximes."

conscience plainly condemns as misbehaviour in the presence of the enemy. A chief who has no confidence in himself cannot expect his men to have faith in him, or in the dispositions he makes; so that the troops are half beaten before they have engaged the enemy. The want of resolution in a general is as plainly felt by his men, as the same in a timid rider is felt by his horse. He who rides without confidence rides for a fall.

'A commander may, of course, consult with those who are qualified to enlighten him, but he should hear their views individually, not collectively; then, having made up his mind, he should take energetic action based on his own conviction of what is right under the circumstances. Wellington was in a perilous situation at Salamanca, and again early in the day at Waterloo, but he meant fighting, and was too strong a character to evade responsibility by calling a council of war, which always lays such undue stress upon the various reasons for not fighting, that it has become proverbial that a council of war never does fight.

Cromwell, Turenne, Marlborough, Eugène, Villars, Frederick, and Napoleon were often in the most critical situations; but they relied upon themselves, and their action was always resolute and determined.* When they did assemble their officers, it was not to ask for counsel, but to give it, and to explain the measures by which they intended to secure victory. The generals then dispersed to their different commands, bearing with them confidence and resolution to the heart of every soldier in the army. There is no better example than Napoleon surrounded by his generals and pointing out the glorious sun that was rising over the field of Austerlitz; and Frederick, in 1760, the evening before the battle of Torgau: "I have assembled you, gentlemen, not to ask your advice, but to tell you that I shall attack Marshal Daun to-morrow. I know that

* For an exception, see p. 18.

he is in a good position; but, at the same time, he is in a *cul-de-sac*; and if I beat him, the whole of his army is taken or drowned in the Elbe. If we are beaten, we shall all perish, and I the first. This war wearies me, it must weary you also; we shall finish it to-morrow." But Frederick, although condemning councils of war, considered that a general should not be above taking advice from a very junior officer if the latter is in a position to give it.* A council of war takes so many into the confidence of the general, that secrecy, which it is so necessary to guard in war, becomes impossible.

It was only on rare occasions Napoleon assembled his generals, either for consultation or explanation, because it was manifestly most inexpedient to call them away from their commands. Von Moltke, too, avoided this practice; but then he had a better trained staff, and he could, and did, send staff officers thoroughly conversant with the military situation, to give detailed instructions. A most striking example of disaster resulting from councils of war is the Jena Campaign. The Prussian generals held council after council; as there was no agreement, there could be no decisive action, but a compromise resulted which led to one of the most decisive defeats in the records of war. It would be an error to suppose the Prussian generals were ignorant of the art of war. More than one good plan was proposed. It was a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth.

Experience.—Napoleon said of Brueys, who was defeated at the battle of the Nile, "that he was a man of unquestionable talent; but he wanted that decisive resolution that enables a man to seize an opportunity on the instant, which I conceive to be the most essential quality in a general or admiral. Probably *from want of experience*, he had not that confidence in his own ability and in the correctness of his plans which hardly

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxv.

anything else can impart. Unless Nature forms a man of so peculiar a stamp as to be enabled to decide instantaneously, *nothing but experience can give it.** I myself commanded an army at twenty-two years of age, but Nature made me different from most others." † Pompey the Great made himself a general-in-chief at twenty-three, but he, too, was different from most others.

Quickness of apprehension, and rapid decision.—Battles are rarely premeditated; we have to face the unexpected, and to grasp at once the situation in order *to act with promptness, energy, and resolution.* At Rossbach and on other occasions Frederick displayed all these qualities. "In all actions there is one critical moment which will give the victory to the general who knows how to seize it." ‡ It was the quickness of apprehension and rapid decision of Wellington which saved him at Salamanca and Talavera. The genius and consummate skill, the quickness of apprehension and rapid decision, the daring, the untiring energy, and the resolution of Napoleon, as exemplified in the campaign of 1796 in Italy, and in the operations about Ratisbon in 1809, demand the unbounded admiration of all students of the art of war. "The fate of a battle," says Napoleon, "is the result of a moment, of one thought; the contending forces approach with various combinations; they close; they fight for a certain time; the decisive moment arrives; a very slight moral advantage declares itself, and then the action of a small reserve secures the victory." §

Professional and general knowledge; capacity for work.—Skilled generals do not fall from the skies. Knowledge is necessary and can only be acquired by application—there is

* See p. 55.

† O'Meara, ii. p. 98. Twenty-two is evidently a slip.

‡ Napier, ii. p. 177. § "Pensées de Napoléon," 6.

no royal road. Napoleon wrote to Jerome:—"It is strength of will, character, application, and daring that have made me what I am." * "Not even the untiring William," says Lord Wolseley, "equalled Marlborough in capacity for constant and heavy business, and in the power of endurance which it demanded. Not even Napoleon toiled harder than did Marlborough. But in comparing these two great soldier-statesmen, it should not be forgotten that Napoleon at Austerlitz was only thirty-seven, whilst Marlborough was nearly a quarter of a century older when he forced the lines of Bouchain." †

"Work is my element," said Napoleon at St. Helena, "I was born and formed for work. I have known the power of my legs, I have known the power of my eyes, but I have never known the extent of my capacity for work." ‡

A general is not reliable who does not possess *capacity for taking pains* to do his best. Disaster has often been the result of carelessness or presumption. Frederick's carelessness and presumption at Kolin, where he made a flank march in sight of the Austrians, resulted in disastrous defeat. Six months later he took pains to conceal his flank movement at Leuthen, and he won a great victory. Marshal Saxe sometimes suffered from not treating the enemy with sufficient respect. The presumption of the Prussian generals in 1806 led to the decisive defeats at Jena and Auerstädt. The French nation imitating this example in 1870, was, in its turn, completely crushed by the German armies. There is no general less open to the charge of carelessness or presumption than Napoleon, and yet, in 1815, he under-rated the power of the Prussian army.

Lively imagination, with the faculty of conceiving great and bold ideas, combined with self-reliance in their execution.—

* "Napoléon Intime," p. 291. † Marlborough, ii. p. 425.
‡ Las Cases, ii. p. 267.

Distrust of self is an unpardonable fault in a leader of men. It is probable that no man could be a great general who is not gifted with a lively imagination. Frederick lays great stress upon it.* "The general," says Lord Wolseley, "who cannot, in his mind's eye, see before him the whole scene that some projected operations will present, who cannot, as it were, picture to himself in a series of mental dissolving views, all the various and progressive phases of, say, an attack upon his enemy's position, lacks a natural quality which no amount of study can supply. If you cannot in your own mind identify yourself with your antagonist; if you cannot put yourself within his brains, as it were, and reason as he is doing at every critical moment of a campaign, and from your knowledge of men, and of him in particular, gather what he means to do, you can never be in the front rank of great commanders. A vivid imagination, allied to a cool, calculating brain, can alone ensure this power to any one." †

Taking all the circumstances into consideration, perhaps no general ever conceived a grander scheme, and carried it through with more remarkable boldness and self-confidence, than Marlborough, when he marched from the Netherlands to the Danube in 1704.

Common sense; tact; judgment.—"Everything is a matter of opinion in war," says Napoleon: "opinion regarding the enemy, opinion regarding one's own soldiers." ‡ In war, in most cases, the judgment is based on opinion regarding misleading and contradictory information, and in some cases there is no information whatever. "In war," says Napoleon, "everything is moral, and the *moral* and opinion make more than half of the reality." §

* "Instructions pour ses généraux," Art. xviii.

† *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius." See also pp. 8, 29.

‡ "Pensées de Napoléon," 63. § Ibid., 68.

Enthusiasm, spirit of enterprise, and love of adventure; discernment, and discrimination of character.—It is a great faculty to be able to select men for the tasks for which they are suited.* How often, with the best of intentions, have officers been placed in positions for which they have proved themselves to be quite unsuited.

Readiness of resource.—A commander should be versatile in the choice of means, and possess the faculty of easily turning his mind to new tasks or subjects. Only consider what a variety of business Napoleon and Wellington had to attend to.

Capacity to organize and to administer.—This talent was conspicuous in Alexander, in Hannibal, Cæsar, Cromwell, Turenne, Frederick, and Napoleon. The Roman generals, especially the Consuls, nearly always possessed administrative capacity and experience, because they were almost invariably selected from the men who had been elected for the civil administration of the country.

The faculty of exerting personal influence and ascendency, so as to inspire the troops with a martial spirit, and with courage and fortitude at critical moments.—For example, Ney at Lutzen.† Napoleon, at St. Helena, said of Marshal Lannes, who was mortally wounded in 1809, "Had he lived to witness our reverses, it would have been impossible for him to have swerved from the path of duty and honour; and he was capable, by his own weight and influence, of changing the whole aspect of affairs." The personal ascendency of Cæsar turned ordinary men into heroes.

Prudence combined with daring.—"Out of the whole multitude of prudent men in the world, the great majority are so from timidity. The higher the rank the more necessary it is that boldness should be accompanied by a reflective mind, that it may not be a mere blind outburst of passion to no

* See p. 47. † See p. 335.

purpose: for with the increase of rank it becomes always less a matter of self-sacrifice and more a matter of the preservation of others, and the good of the whole." * Excessive prudence is answerable, however, for more disasters than unreflecting daring.

"A commander is not indeed to refrain from high attempts because of their perilous nature; the greatest leaders have always been the most daring." † "I know," said Lucius Marcius on assuming command after the death of the two Scipios, "that the measure appears to you daring; but it is when your circumstances are so difficult as to be almost desperate that the boldest counsels are the safest." "He who would be great in war must be daring; but to set all upon one throw belongs not to an irresponsible chief, not to a lieutenant, whose task is but a portion of the general plan." ‡ Turenne was prudent by temperament and bold by reflection. § The same may be said of Wellington. Villars was another great general who believed in energetic action. "When one is determined to make war," he said, "the grandest and the boldest plans are often the wisest and the most fortunate. When one wishes to make war, it is necessary to do the business well, and above all things not to fumble over it." "The mixture of daring and caution," says Lord Wolseley, "with which Marlborough compensated for inferiority in numbers, reminds us of Wellington in the Peninsula." ‖

The capitulation at Ulm, in 1805, of Mack with 30 000 Austrians is one of the most disgraceful in history. Dupont was a capable and brave officer, and yet he covered himself with dishonour by shamelessly surrendering an army of 18,000 Frenchmen at Baylen, in 1808, to Spanish irregulars. The surrender of Metz, with a large field army, overwhelmed Bazaine with ignominy, and put Ulm quite in the background.

* Causewitz, p. 69. † Napier, vi. p. 191. ‡ Ibid., iv. p. 382.
§ Bussy Rabutin. ‖ Marlborough, p. 147.

At Ulm, at Baylen, and at Metz there may have been much prudence, but there was no daring.

Ney and Murat were two of the most daring generals in the annals of war. In the retreat from Russia, after passing Smolensk, Ney and about 6000 men were apparently hopelessly cut off, but scorning to surrender, and notwithstanding their utter misery and sufferings, these brave men crowned themselves with honour and glory and undying fame by forcing their way to the Dnieper, which they crossed under great difficulties, and marching down the far bank, joined Napoleon barely 2000 strong. Is there a Frenchman, proud of his country, who would say that Marshal Ney and his six thousand warriors should have prudently laid down their arms?

When Napoleon was retreating from Moscow, moving by the southern or Kalouga road, his way was barred by Kutusoff with his whole army. It appears that Murat was the only one who urged an attack, and for once his advice in council was sounder than that of the other distinguished soldiers who were assembled. "There are occasions," said Murat, "when prudence is rashness and rashness becomes prudence." However, Napoleon decided not to attack but to fall back and retreat by the northern road by which he had advanced. This was probably the greatest error in judgment the emperor ever committed in war. It was one of the few occasions in which he ever called a council of war, and supplies a good example of the truth of the old saying that a council of war never fights. Napoleon paid dearly for his prudence and want of daring on this occasion.

No fear of responsibility.—"To the minister, however, he (Wellington) complained that his generals, stout in action personally as the poorest soldiers, were commonly so overwhelmed with fear of responsibility when left to themselves, that the slightest movement of the enemy deprived them of

their judgment, and they spread alarm far and wide."* This was the direct result of their vicious training. The immense responsibility assumed by Marlborough when he marched from the Meuse to the Danube, and fought the battle of Blenheim, furnishes a perfect example of the opposite type of general. The capture of Gibraltar in 1704 is another brilliant example. Sir George Rooke, acting without orders, displayed sound judgment and fearlessness of responsibility. To him, and him alone, we owe the key of the Mediterranean. Grouchy feared responsibility when he failed to march to the sound of the cannon at Waterloo.

On rare occasions a general-in-chief may be justified in assuming the immense responsibility of disobeying an order. In 1793, Hoche refused to obey an order to march against the enemy under circumstances which he considered would place his army in a most critical and perilous situation. For this behaviour he was thrown into a dungeon. It was unfortunate for the French nation that McMahon did not refuse to lead the French army to destruction and dishonour at Sedan. When Dupont surrendered at Baylen, he included in the capitulation two divisions at a distance, and whose retreat was still possible. These divisions should not have obeyed the order.

Mahan, writing of the great French admiral Tourville, says that he was brave enough to do anything, but with all his high qualities he seems to have failed where so many warriors fail, in the ability to assume a great responsibility.† On the other hand, it will be useful to note that great disaster has sometimes resulted from commanders of mediocre ability assuming the responsibility of disobeying an order. Napoleon occupied a central position at Dresden in 1813. He well understood the hot-headed impetuosity of Blucher, consequently he

* Napier, iv. p. 166. See description of Berthier, p. 35.

† "Influence of Sea Power upon History," p. 185.

instructed Macdonald to await his attack and profit by his errors. Instead of doing so, Macdonald advanced over difficult country to meet Blucher, and was defeated at the Katzbach with fatal results to his master. Macdonald sacrificed all the advantages of Napoleon's central position. Ney, about the same time, was similarly to blame for being defeated at Dennewitz. Villeneuve, though wanting in resolution, assumed the responsibility of disobeying Napoleon's orders; the appalling disaster of Trafalgar, and the complete wreck of all the Emperor's great plans were the results.*

Great self-command, self-restraint, and self-denial.—Very few men without these qualities could rise to high command. The biographies of most great men reveal their extraordinary self-discipline during their early lives.

Presence of mind, calmness in danger and in trouble.—It is quite certain that everything will not work smoothly. Uncertainty, inertia, friction, and unforeseen accidents will be the rule, not the exception. A general should receive his reports with calmness, and be not unduly impressed by what is passing under his own observation, and personal danger must never confuse his brain. Clausewitz defines a strong-minded man as one who can preserve his equanimity under the most powerful excitement, so that, notwithstanding the storm in his heart, his perception and judgment are not affected.

To all appearance, the French had been hopelessly defeated at Marengo, and all the generals, Napoleon and Desaix excepted, counselled a retreat. Their calmness in this crisis changed defeat into victory. Again at Aspern, Napoleon's courage did not forsake him. "Grave and thoughtful, but collected, he allayed, by the *calmness* of his manner the alarms of those around him."†

* Archduke John twice disobeyed orders, p. 141 (note).

† Alison, viii. p. 97.

"Compelled to remain stationary under a tremendous cross-fire of artillery from the hostile batteries on either side of the angle, the courage of the soldiers quivered under this dreadful trial, where war exhibited all its dangers with none of its excitement, and several battalions disbanded and fled. Napoleon, meanwhile, calm and collected in the midst of the general disquietude, rode backwards and forwards for an hour amidst a storm of cannon-balls, unmoved by personal danger." * "But what Marlborough was," says Lord Wolseley, "on the field of Blenheim itself, how in the moments of apparent ill-success and failure his presence, by its combined fire and calmness, reanimated the wavering and assured the victory; this may be recorded, but here as elsewhere, I believe that not one man in a thousand who reads of it realizes what it implies." † Marlborough was "cool and calm as Cæsar in the midst of the most appalling danger." ‡

"A general directing the strategy may possess rare gifts," says Lord Wolseley, "but that same man pushed into the midst of excitement and of peril, and of all the emotions and startling sensations which such a position occasions, might then be unable to exercise the quickness of apprehension and the soundness of judgment that can alone enable a man in that position to duly weigh the circumstances, analyze the situation, and at once come to the right conclusion. To be able to do this, and to carry out a decision so arrived at, with all the coolness of one who has no serious responsibility in the matter—to be not only personally indifferent to danger in its most appalling form, but to possess a mind so evenly balanced that it is inaccessible to the impressions and disturbing influences of danger, is surely one of the very rarest of all

* Battle of Wagram. Alison, viii. p. 164.

† *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius."

‡ Marlborough, ii. p. 431.

human qualities. Of all the commanders whose lives I have studied, none possessed this gift, this rare power, in so remarkable a degree as Marlborough; as a general in action it was his most striking characteristic." *

"A too anxious commander is the natural prey of false emissaries." † "I consider that on the day of battle the general should attend to nothing else but the battle. He will see it better, keep his judgment sounder, and be better able to profit by any opportunities offered by the enemy while the fighting lasts." ‡ The battle of Spicheren had commenced in earnest, but Frossard was still busy at Forbach, attending to administrative details when he might have been more profitably employed in acquainting himself personally with the military situation.

The light-heartedness of Hannibal before the great battle of Cannæ is described by Plutarch in his life of Fabius. Hannibal rode up to a hill, to take a view of the enemy then drawn up for battle. "One Gisco, a man of his own rank, happening to say, 'The numbers of the enemy appeared to him surprising,' Hannibal replied with a serious countenance, 'There is another thing which has escaped your observation, much more surprising than that.' Upon his asking what it was, 'It is,' said Hannibal, 'that among such numbers not one of them is named Gisco.' The whole company were diverted with the humour of his observations; and as they returned to camp, they told the jest to those they met, so that the laugh became universal. At sight of this the Carthaginians took courage, thinking it must proceed from the great contempt in which their general held the Romans, that he could jest and laugh in the face of danger."

In future wars we shall have a general in command of the

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius."

† Kinglake, viii. p. 259. ‡ Marshal Saxe.

line of communications; and by this arrangement the commander-in-chief will be relieved of much work and anxiety regarding the organization, maintenance, and protection of his communications, and he will be able to devote calmly more of his attention to the military situation than was possible for Wellington in his day.

Circumspection.—Polybius lays great stress on the power to keep silence, "not to allow either joy at the appearance of an unexpected hope, or fear, or familiarity, or natural affection, to induce a man to communicate his plans to any one unconcerned, but to impart it to those alone without whom it is impossible to complete his plan; and not even to them a moment sooner than necessary, but only when the exigencies of the particular service make it inevitable. It is necessary, moreover, not only to be silent with the tongue, but much more so in the mind. For it has happened to many generals before now, while preserving an inviolable silence, to betray their thoughts, either by the expression of their countenances or by their actions." * A modern example of sound circumspection was the reticence of Lord Wolseley regarding his plan of operations in 1882.

Power of concentration and deliberation.—In this respect Napoleon stands unrivalled.

Perseverance; patience; tenacity of purpose.—"There is hardly any celebrated enterprise in war which was not achieved by endless exertion, pains and privations; and as here the weakness of the physical and moral man is ever disposed to yield, therefore only an immense force of will which manifests itself in perseverance, admired by present and future generations, can carry us through." † Wellington in his campaigns in the Peninsula and South of France, admirably illustrated these essential qualities.

* Book ix., 13. † Clausewitz, p. 99.

It is an enormous advantage to have a character for *integrity*,* *sense of honour*, *sense of duty to God and man*, *patriotism*, *freedom from jealousy and self-seeking*, *consistency*, *impartial justice*, *modesty*, *good temper*, *good manners*, *and consideration for others*, because all these beget the more devoted service. Nelson and Wellington possessed many of these qualities; Marlborough possessed all except integrity and freedom from self-seeking. "Strict integrity and lofty patriotism," says Lord Wolseley, "were common to both Turenne and Wellington."† Over and over again Roman armies suffered decisive defeats, as at Trebbia, because the consuls from personal considerations fought battles at inopportune times, solely because their tenures of office were expiring, and they were jealous of their successors. In the same way the French disasters in the Peninsula were in great measure due to the jealousy and self-seeking of the marshals.

"Marlborough had many failings," writes Lord Wolseley, "and great as he was, it is not easy to love his memory as we all love that of Nelson, nor to respect it as we do that of Wellington. Yet still there is something so attractive about the man's personality that we feel drawn towards him, in spite of his faults. He was no saint, and he was too fond of money, but throughout his whole life he displayed a simplicity and gentleness of disposition, a touching sympathy with grief and sorrow, and a loathing of cruelty and injustice, that go far to counterbalance his many faults. Mercy was always in his thoughts, and if in action he smote hard, he always sheathed his sword with unaffected pleasure, and upon any good excuse. To the wounded and the destitute he was ever a friend, and he proved the kindness of his heart by a compassionate sympathy

* Which some of the generals of the French Revolution had not. See also Napoleon's opinion, p. 37.

† Marlborough, i. p. 147.

for his prisoners, and the care to avoid hurting their feelings by any exultation of manner." * "After Nelson," says Mahan, "Lord St. Vincent stands first amongst British commanders-in-chief, but, though not an ungenerous man, he lacked the sympathetic qualities that made Nelson at once so lovable and so great a leader of men." † According to Plutarch, when Pericles was dying, B.C. 428, he spoke to his friends as follows: —"I am surprised that, while you dwell upon and extol these acts of mine, though fortune had her share in them, and many other generals have performed the like, you take no notice of the greatest and most honourable part of my character, that no Athenian through my means ever put on mourning." Pericles had a large share of those qualities which make leaders of men. Marius and Sylla were cruel, but as a general rule, great men are not cruel. "Great men," said Napoleon, "are never cruel without necessity." ‡ He himself was essentially not a cruel man.

Cheerfulness; hope; fortitude.—"Hope makes men endure anything and attempt anything; if you take it away from them, or if it is too long deferred, you take the life out of them." § "Nothing is more essential in war than a confident front. A general should never acknowledge himself vanquished; the front line always looks formidable, and the adversary can seldom know what is passing behind." ‖ It is fatal for a general to give way to despondency; he must bear bitter disappointments with fortitude, and not become a prey to gloomy apprehensions. When there are continual dangers, incessant and wearing toils, and cruel privations, then should a general more than ever evince unshaken confidence, and

* Marlborough, ii. p. 427.
† "Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution, etc.," i. p. 205.
‡ Rémusat, i. p. 280.
§ Saxe.
‖ Napier, iii. p. 182.

maintain the spirit of his troops against depression, stimulating himself by feeling that his subordinates look to him for guidance and support. There is no brighter example than Napoleon in 1809, 1813, and 1814; nor should we forget the patience with which Frederick the Great bore his heavy reverses, and played an up-hill game from first to last.

"A quality in a general," says Lord Wolseley, "the importance of which few men not soldiers realize, is that which Cæsar showed when defeated by no fault of his own at Dyrrhachium, or when after almost all the world had deserted him because of his apparent failure in Spain, he changed the history of the world by his calm facing of misfortune and his power of using his knowledge of men, and his military skill, undisturbed by the accidents of fate. It was probably this latter quality that Pompey, himself no mean strategist, lacked, and his want of steadfastness lost him the empire of the world. Unduly elated after Dyrrhachium, he abandoned himself to despair after Pharsalia. A man must almost have stood in the position of the general who suddenly sees before him the probability of failure, to realize the strain that on either of the occasions I speak of, Cæsar must have undergone, and the greatness of the mind that, unaffected by fate or chance, could in such circumstances lift the feelings of a whole army from discouragement and despair to victory-giving enthusiasm." * Hannibal's perseverance, patience, and tenacity of purpose bore an even greater strain than Cæsar's.

As further examples of fortitude, we have the spirit shown by the Roman Senate after Hannibal's great victories; by Napoleon throughout the disastrous campaigns of 1812, 1813, 1814; and by Austria in 1809, when, undismayed by her reverses, she made such heroic efforts to retrieve her fortune. Adversity appears to crush the weak, but to add

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius."

might to the strong. It was said of Masséna that he was never at his best until affairs took a serious turn. Turenne also was most formidable after having sustained a reverse.

A leader of men *commands obedience, respect, and, generally, affection.*

"An admirable feature in Hannibal's character," says Polybius, "and the strongest proof of his having been a born ruler of men, and having possessed statesmanlike qualities of an unusual kind, is that, though he was for seventeen years engaged in actual warfare, and though he had to make his way through numerous barbaric tribes, and to employ innumerable men of different nationalities in what appeared desperate and hazardous enterprises, he was never made the object of a conspiracy by any of them, nor deserted by any of those who had joined him and put themselves under his command." The same author gives examples of the popularity of Scipio. "There was a magnetism about Marlborough," says Lord Wolseley, "which made itself felt in every society which he frequented, and worked like a spell upon all who came within the circuit of its force."

Napoleon once said, "I have inspired multitudes to die for me. God forbid that I should form any comparison between the enthusiasm of my soldiers and Christian charity; they are as different as their causes. And then my presence was required; the electricity of my look, my voice: a word from me, then the sacred fire was kindled in all hearts. I certainly possess the secret of that magic power which carries away other people's minds; yet I could never communicate it to others. Not one of my generals ever received it from me, or guessed at it; neither have I the power to eternalize my name and my love in the heart. Now that I am at St. Helena—now that I am alone, nailed to this rock, who fights and conquers empires for me? What courtiers have I in my misfortune?

Does any one think of me? Does any one in Europe move for me? Who has remained faithful? Where are my friends? Yes, you, two or three whose fidelity immortalizes you, share my exile." "Here the voice of the Emperor assumed a peculiar tone of melancholy, irony, and deep sadness." *

Probably no commander was ever so much loved by his soldiers as Napoleon. The following is an extraordinary instance of this love and devotion; it happened in 1809 before Ratisbon: "Napoleon at noon arrived on the spot, and in his anxiety to press the assault, approached so near the walls that a musket-ball struck him on the right foot, and occasioned a considerable contusion. The pain obliged him to dismount from his horse, and the report spread that the Emperor was wounded.† This occasioned so much grief and consternation that the Emperor had to remount his horse, and show himself to the troops, by whom he was welcomed by rapturous cheers. However, the pain of his wound was so acute that he had to retire to his tent, where he swooned away."

"The fascination," says Lord Wolseley, "which in life Napoleon personally exercised over his own followers we often feel ourselves, even now, when we contemplate his soaring genius, and attempt to measure his greatness." The devotion and love of the 10th Legion for Cæsar is a well-known historic fact.

One more example: "But when Hannibal himself, while he too incautiously approached the wall (at the siege of Saguntum), fell severely wounded in the thigh by a javelin, such flight and dismay spread around, that the works and vineæ had nearly been abandoned." ‡ On the other hand, there is Frederick, a general of the highest reputation, whose severity was so intolerable that his soldiers often preferred death

* Extract from an address. O'Meara, ii. p. 355.
† Alison, viii. p. 66.
‡ Livy, xxi. 7.

to life. Wellington commanded obedience and respect but not affection.

Plutarch relates of Cæsar that "such was the *affection* of his soldiers, that they who under other commanders were nothing above the common rate of men, became invincible where Cæsar's glory was concerned, and met the most dreadful dangers with a courage that nothing could resist. Another thing that contributed to make them invincible was their seeing *Cæsar always take his share in danger, and never desire any exemption from labour and fatigue.* As for his exposing his person to danger, they were not surprised at it, because they knew his passion for glory, but they were astonished at his patience under toil, so far in all appearance above his bodily powers. For he was of a slender make, fair, of a delicate constitution, and subject to violent headaches and epileptic fits."

A general *must display force of character* in the execution of his plans; and convince all that he has no distrust in his own powers, because *vacillation destroys all confidence.* In war uncertainty exists at all times and in all places, and many things are always happening to distract and confuse the mind; therefore, there is no pursuit in life more unsuited to a man of a vacillating character than the command of troops in the field.

Details must not be allowed to swamp or obscure the conception of a grand leading idea. A general should be able *to concentrate his attention, and at the same time to take a broad view of a situation.* He should have *the gift of forming an accurate mental picture of the military situation* by the aid of the map, and the reports from the different parts of the field. He cannot, perhaps, inspect personally all the dispositions for a great battle, nor himself supervise every arrangement for a campaign; therefore, in order to initiate and carry out great plans, he must be inspired by a vivid and lively imagination; a

torpid mind is a serious disqualification. Referring to the far greater difficulties to be overcome by a general than by an admiral, Napoleon adds:—"It is through the mind's eye, by weighing each argument, and by a sort of inspiration that the general sees, knows, and judges. It is, in short, a gift that one calls *coup d'œil militaire*, and which great generals have received from nature." *

Although a general cannot be everywhere, *his influence should be felt everywhere*—he must "multiply himself"—and *he should see as much as possible for himself.* In a modern battle of vast extent, like Gravelotte, it may not be possible to see everything. But had Von Moltke occupied a more central position he might with advantage have seen more than he did. Hence it is necessary that a general in the field should possess great physical activity, be a good horseman, have good eyesight, and not be subject to any infirmity. "A general who sees with the eyes of others," observed Napoleon, "will never be able to command an army as it should be commanded. During the invasion of Portugal Masséna was ill; he was obliged to trust to the reports of others, and consequently failed in some of his undertakings. At Busaco, for example, he attempted to carry a position almost impregnable in the manner he attacked it; whereas, if he had commenced by turning it, he would have succeeded. This was owing to his not being able to reconnoitre personally." He added, "That if Masséna had been what he was formerly, he would have followed Wellington so closely as to be able to attack him while entering the lines before Lisbon, before he could have taken up his position properly." †

* "Maximes de Guerre," cxv. See pp. 8, 15.

† O'Meara, ii. p. 288. See "Mémoirs du Général Baron de Marbot," who considered that Masséna's liaison with a certain Madame X—— accounted for nearly all the disasters that attended this invasion of Portugal.

By remaining throughout the battle of Spicheren at Forbach, Frossard attempted to see with the eyes of others; consequently he was imperfectly informed, and opportunity after opportunity for effective action was allowed to pass.

In his instructions to his generals, Frederick more than once lays stress upon the importance of a general seeing things for himself. He attributed Villars's defeat at Malplaquet to neglect to examine the marsh on his right, which was crossed by the enemy, although reported impassable. He adds, "It is necessary to see with one's own eyes, and not to suppose that such care is of little consequence."* Hence the importance of physical power, energy, and vigour.

The statement of Frederick, that the cause of Villars's defeat at Malplaquet was his neglect to satisfy himself that the marsh was actually impassable, affords us another useful lesson. It warns us to be on our guard against accepting too readily assertions regarding the cause of a defeat, even when made by a master of war. No doubt Frederick gives *one* of the causes, though probably not the principal cause, of Villars's defeat. In most cases there are many incidents more or less connected with the final cause, which cannot be disregarded without leading us to a false conclusion. False deductions are the pit-falls in the path of the military student.

A commander should *not attach undue importance to favourable or unfavourable reports*, and he should be prepared to deal with much misleading and inaccurate information. Hence the importance of the position of the head-quarters of the commander-in-chief during the preliminary strategical movements, and afterwards on the field of battle. If the commander is too far removed, he cannot in the former case receive reports or issue orders without the most serious delay. In the latter case—that is, on the field

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. viii.

of battle, when minutes often are of value—it is essential that he should be on the spot to see things with his own eyes, and to feel the pulse of the troops, otherwise fatal delays must occur. On the other hand, he must guard against being too vividly impressed by mere local incidents which come under his immediate notice. For example, had Bazaine not been obliged to draw his sword to defend himself at Mars-la-Tour, and had he not seen with his own eyes the masses of Germans on his left flank, it is possible he might not have been so impressed as to counter-order the retreat from Metz while it was still possible, a retreat which a calmer judgment might have clearly indicated as the best course under the circumstances.

It is not intended to imply that a commander is never to go where the battle is raging, because a general who avoids all danger will never have a great moral ascendency over his troops. The fall of the commander-in-chief may create great confusion, but at times his place may be in the thick of the fight. Witness Napoleon at "the terrible passage of the bridge of Lodi," at Arcola, at Essling, and at other battles. All that can be said is that the position of the commander-in-chief should usually be a central one, where he can readily receive reports, and from whence he can have a good view, and direct the movements of all his troops without undue local interference with subordinate commanders.

A general should be *liberal-minded and accessible.** He should give due respects to differences of opinion, if he is to profit by the views and ideas of those with whom he is associated. *Apathy to trifles* will spare much wear and tear upon the constitution. No great-minded man ever denies to his subordinates their full share of the credit and glory. *The commander who thinks only of himself will never be well served.*

* See Masséna at Busaco, p. 161.

The deficiencies in a commander-in-chief have sometimes been made good by the ability of a chief of the staff who was strong where the other was weak; see, for example, the association of Gneisenau with Blucher. But "the first element of success in war is that everything should emanate from a single head." * Napoleon wrote as follows to the Directory:— "Every one has his own way of making war. General Kellermann has more experience, and will do it better than I, but, the two of us together, will do it badly. I believe that one bad general is worth more than two good ones." † The case of Marlborough and Eugène is hardly parallel, but it is extraordinary how well they worked together, though even between them there was at times considerable friction. Examples of the disastrous results of divided authority are the Roman Consuls at Cannæ; the French generals at Blenheim; and the British and French commanders in the Crimea. At the outbreak of the civil war, the Confederate General Beauregard wrote to General Johnston, "Oh, that we had one good head to conduct our operations! We are unfortunately labouring under the disadvantage of having about seven armies in the field, under as many independent commanders, which is contrary to the first principles of the art of war." If this state of affairs had not been soon rectified, the Confederacy could not have carried on the war for four long years.

Some men can sketch out excellent plans, but are quite unequal to executing them. This is not surprising, because to frame a plan requires no courage, but to execute it does, and many other qualities besides.‡ De Marbot, who distinguished himself at the battle of the Katzbach where MacDonald was defeated, writes of the marshal,§ "Before

* Napier, ii. p. 211.
† Lanfrey, i. p. 107.
‡ See p. 3.
§ Vol. iii. p. 283.

the fight, he traced out for himself a plan of action which was nearly always good; but he should have been able to modify it according to circumstances, and that is just what his torpid mind was unable to do. He acted like certain chess-players who, when they direct their own side as well as that of an absent adversary, manage everything entirely in their own interest so long as they play alone; but no longer know what to do, when, in a real game the adversary places his pieces quite differently to what they had supposed!" Napoleon said, "Reynier was a man of talent, but more fit to give counsel to an army of twenty or thirty thousand men than to command one of five or six."* There never was a general who could initiate grander plans than Napoleon, and at the same time possessed the extraordinary force of character necessary to execute them. The Archduke Charles had similar force of character; in 1796, when he was operating against Jourdan, his instructions to Latour commanding his left wing were, "Let Moreau go even to Vienna: that will matter little, provided I beat Jourdan."

There are many able men to whom a public career is most distasteful. Napoleon considered his brother Joseph one of these. "His virtues and talents," he said, "are those of a private character; and for such Nature intended him: he is too good to be a great man. He has no ambition."†

It is wise to study the character and qualities of our opponent; he is a determinate factor that should greatly influence our plans. The great thing is to out-wit the opposing general by taking advantage of his weak points. This art was thoroughly understood by Hannibal and by Napoleon. Lee studied his adversary and varied his methods to suit the peculiarities of a McClellan, a Pope, a Hooker, or a Grant. We should also understand our own commanders,

* O'Meara, ii. p. 100. † Ibid., i. p. 216.

and, even to a greater degree, those whom we ourselves command.

By his knowledge of the Roman general's character, Hannibal had been able to draw him out, and beyond the river Trebbia, and decisively defeat him in a most unfavourable position. In the following year Hannibal satisfied himself that the new Consul Flaminius was a mere mob-orator, self-confident, and very vain. He consequently calculated upon many favourable opportunities for fighting at his own time and on his own ground. Flaminius was advised by his officers to await the junction with the other consular army; but he was anxious to secure all the credit of a victory, and, moreover, became excited and enraged beyond all patience by Hannibal affecting to despise him. The Carthaginian was convinced that Flaminius would follow him and attack at the first opportunity; he therefore lured him into a mountain defile where he had skilfully prepared an ambush; and at the battle of the Trasimene Lake, the Consul was slain, and his whole army destroyed.

Great men have always had their weak points, but these have been more than compensated for by the possession of some unusually strong ones. No man is infallible.

It frequently happens that an excellent subordinate general fails entirely under the responsibility of chief command: witness the incapacity evinced by Berthier at the commencement of the campaign of 1809, when he "brought the Empire within a hair's breadth of destruction by his faulty dispositions." * Napoleon was quick to perceive the danger, and calmly rectified all Berthier's mistakes before their effects had become irretrievable.†

* See p. 4 for Napoleon's opinion of Murat; and Wellington's opinion of his generals, p. 18. Ney and Grouchy, see p. 8.

† For particulars see Jomini, "Art of War," p. 265.

Marshal Saxe wrote, "I have seen very good colonels become very bad generals," and a good brigade commander may be quite unfitted for a higher post.—On the other hand, "It is undoubtedly beyond question," says Jomini, "that it is quite possible to be able to combine operations skilfully without ever having led a regiment against an enemy. Peter the Great, Condé, Frederick, and Napoleon are instances of it." *

Speaking of some of his generals, Napoleon said, "It is difficult to pronounce which is superior, as they have not had many opportunities of commanding in chief, which is the only mode by which you can ascertain the extent of a man's talents." †

A subordinate general who obeys an order feels that, even if disaster follows, he may to a certain extent throw the blame on his superior; whereas that superior knows that if the order is wrong, he and he alone must bear the consequences. It is a well known fact that but few men have the force of character to undertake the undivided responsibility of directing military operations—Canrobert, in the Crimea, is an example.

A general must be a student of human nature, and should at all times be in closest touch with the feelings, interests, and prejudices of his men. It is only a commander who is personally known to his troops, and possesses their entire confidence, who can really gauge, under the stress of adverse circumstances, the extent to which he can press them, or the efforts of which they may be still capable. "Every leader of a party should know how to make use of enthusiasm; there is not a faction which has not its mob-orators. The greatest general with soldiers devoid of enthusiasm is only an ignoramus." ‡ "Napoleon," says Lord Wolseley, "thoroughly

* "Art of War," p. 56. † O'Meara, ii. p. 45.

‡ "Pensées de Napoléon," 41.

understood the minds and hearts of men, especially of Frenchmen, and was fully alive to those influences which form and mould the human character to make the individual either good or bad, and which, in doing so, make nations either great or small."

Hannibal, Scipio, Cæsar, Suwarroff, and Napoleon excelled in the art of rousing a martial spirit in the armies that they commanded. Napoleon's presence alone was the signal for outbursts of enthusiasm. Yet even he, with all his knowledge of men, hardly recognized * that there is a limit to human endurance, and that there is "a desire of ease natural to mankind," which sometimes, says Napier, "prevails even against the suggestions of honour." "The French soldiers' attachment to Napoleon was steadfast, yet human nature shrinks from perpetual contact with death, and they were tired of war." † Despite the brilliant feats of the French troops in the campaign of 1814, it is certain that the drain of upwards of twenty years' continuous warfare had—though the Emperor would not see it—exhausted both the nation and the army.

Again, in 1815, when the reverses came, the nation in its exhaustion showed no fortitude; but though much may be said against the behaviour of the superior officers, not a word can be said against the rank and file. Napoleon himself bears testimony in these words: "Never has the French soldier shown more courage, good-will, and enthusiasm; he was full of the feeling of his superiority over all the soldiers of Europe. His confidence in the Emperor was complete, and had perhaps even increased; but he was suspicious and distrustful of his other chiefs. The treasons of 1814 were always present in his mind: every movement that he did not understand

* Except in the case of certain of his marshals.

† Napier, ii. p. 69. Refers to Peninsular war, 1809.

disquieted him, and he believed himself betrayed."* "And who can," says Lord Wolseley, writing of 1814, "withhold his admiration of the sterling courage, the honest fidelity and simple loyalty of the rank and file to the master who had so often led them to victory? Although we may feel that he was little worthy of their noble devotion, who will deny his meed of praise to the humble, warm-hearted, and gallant French soldier for bestowing it upon the idol of his life?"

Napoleon probably also gauged correctly the spirit of the nation, and the following was dictated at St. Helena:—"Everything might have been retrieved; but it required character, energy, and firmness on the part of the officers, of the government, of the Chambers, and of the whole nation! It was necessary that the nation should have been animated by the feeling of honour, of glory, and of national independence, that it should have fixed its eyes on Rome after the battle of Cannæ, and not on Carthage after Zama! If France had risen to this level, she was invincible. Her people had more military instincts than any other people in the world. Warlike stores were in abundance and would have sufficed for all that was required." †

The frame of mind or the indisposition of the general may affect the issue of a battle, and even decide the fate of an empire. Napoleon's later misfortunes may perhaps be attributed in a great measure to his failing health. "The habit of eating fast and carelessly is supposed to have paralyzed Napoleon on two of the most critical occasions of his life—the battles of Borodino and Leipsic. On each of these occasions he is known to have been suffering from indigestion. On the third day of Dresden, too (as the German novelist Hoffman, who was in the town, asserts), the Emperor's energies were impaired by the effects of a shoulder of mutton stuffed

* Las Cases, ii. p. 154. † Ibid., ii. p. 151.

with onions! There can be no doubt that Napoleon's irregularity as to meals injured his health and shortened his life." *

Napoleon was ill and prostrated after Ligny; he showed a lack of both physical and mental energy, and during the night, and again on the morning of June 17th, he was slow to come to a decision, and the result was fatal to success. "There can be no doubt," says Lord Wolseley, "that over him was cast a weariness and a lethargy, the result of ill-health, which weakened him and exercised an unfortunate spell over his actions."

"I have dwelt upon the state of Napoleon's health," writes Lord Wolseley, "in what I may term the last act of his curiously histrionic career, because I believe it to have been the primary cause of his final overthrow at Waterloo. The more I study his grandly conceived plan of campaign for 1815, the more convinced I am that the overwhelming defeat in which it ended was primarily the result of bodily disease, and the failure of mental power which resulted from it at supreme moments, when rapid and energetic decision was imperatively necessary for success. Had he been able to bring the mental and bodily energy of his early career to bear upon the great plan he had conceived for the destruction of Wellington and Blucher in Belgium, judging of what those commanders would have done by what they did do, I believe the cautious Englishman would at least have had to retreat in haste for the purpose of re-embarking at Ostend; whilst the fiery and impetuous Prussian would have been almost destroyed at Ligny, and only too glad to place the Rhine between the remnants of his beaten army and the victor of Jena.

"In no other way can I satisfactorily account for the valuable hours squandered by Napoleon, or the careless faultiness of many of his most important orders during this campaign.

* Bourrienne, i. p. 280.

Nor can I otherwise explain to myself how two armies situated as were those of Wellington and Blucher on June 14th, 15th, and 16th, were allowed to escape during the two following days from the destruction with which Napoleon's most ably devised scheme of operations ought to have overwhelmed them. His fatigued and lethargic condition, on the early morning of the 17th, accounts for the many hours of daylight that were trifled away, and were then uselessly squandered. Grouchy, anxious to begin the pursuit, strove to see Napoleon at daybreak, but was not admitted to his presence until eight a.m., and even then it was impossible to elicit any definite instructions from him. Indeed, as a matter of fact, no orders were issued until noon, Grouchy receiving his verbally about one p.m., a delay which enabled Blucher to reach Waterloo in time the following day to give the French their final despatch there. Well, indeed, may Vandamme have said to those around him, 'The Napoleon whom we have known exists no more, our yesterday's (the 16th) success will have no result.'

"I believe it was not so much the deep condition of the country after the heavy rain as a recurrence of this fatal malady on the morning of Waterloo, added of course to the fact that he did not expect Blucher's arrival on the field of battle that day, which caused him to begin the action so late, and so purposely to throw away hours which might have been employed in destroying Wellington before the Prussians could arrive. We know that during the progress of the battle itself he remained seated for hours motionless at a table placed for him in the open, often asleep with his head resting upon his arms; that also when flying beaten from the field he suffered so much from drowsiness, it was with difficulty his attendants prevented him from tumbling from his horse. During the progress of the battle he was little on horseback, for riding

caused him pain. He was thus debarred from seeing for himself much of the Prussian advance upon Planchenoit, and consequently did not fully realize what the dangers of his position were as early as he should have done, had he been able to ride rapidly from point to point upon the field of battle to obtain information for himself. Indeed, it is to this cause only we can attribute the fact that he began this battle without having himself previously reconnoitred or examined Wellington's position, relying on General Haxo's report upon it."* Napoleon himself said, "Health is indispensable in war, and cannot be replaced by anything."† In 1812 Napoleon was only about forty-three years of age, yet he acknowledged that his physical vigour was sadly on the wane. After the great victory of Dunbar, Cromwell, then only fifty years of age, wrote to his wife that he "felt the infirmities of age marvellously stealing upon him."‡

The mental powers may remain unimpaired till the end, but not so the physical—Napoleon and Frederick were no exceptions. The mind cannot always rule the body; the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is too often weak. There are, however, some remarkable and heroic instances of men of indomitable will overcoming the feebleness of the body. One of the most brilliant achievements of Marshal Saxe was his victory over the English and the allies at Fontenoy in 1745. On this occasion he was, according to Carlyle, "nearly dead of dropsy; could not sit on horseback except for a few minutes; was carried about in a wicker bed; and had a lead bullet in his mouth all day to mitigate the intolerable thirst."§

At Wagram, Masséna followed this heroic example:

* "Decline and Fall of Napoleon."

† Ségur, p. 194. ‡ Harrison, p. 159.

§ Saxe, in 1744, was in command of an army destined for the invasion of England, foiled partly by our fleet, partly by a storm.

"Masséna then evinced great strength of mind; for, in spite of the acute pain he suffered, he chose to retain his command, declaring that, after the example of Marshal Saxe at Fontenoy, he would be carried to the field of battle by his grenadiers. It was arranged that Masséna should go to the field of battle in his open carriage, accompanied by his surgeon, because it was necessary to renew every hour the compresses on his leg." * William III., Wolfe, and Nelson displayed similar courage and strength of will under similar circumstances. †

There is a certain period in a man's life when experience, judgment, and enthusiasm are evenly balanced. In war, enthusiasm is as necessary as experience and judgment; therefore, when age has chilled our ardour, active operations are no longer a fit field for employment. In September, 1810, Napoleon urged Masséna not to further postpone the invasion of Portugal, but to "fall boldly on the English after having well observed where the blow may be given." But "Masséna, chilled by age and honours, was wasting time." ‡ The great Dutch admiral, De Ruyter, is an exception which proves the rule. At the battle of Texel, in 1673, he was "old in years, for he was sixty-six, yet he had lost none of his martial vigour. His attack was as furious as eight years before, and his judgment had apparently ripened rapidly through the experience of the last war." § There have been generals of much greater age than De Ruyter, who have led their men in battle, but their names are not well known. The great Athenian general Phocion was eighty years of age.

Take that man of extraordinary energy, Napoleon himself. At St. Helena in 1816, when he was about forty-seven years of

* De Marbot, ii. p. 241.

† Turenne, William III., Wolfe, Nelson, and Wellington were all sickly as children.

‡ Napier, iii. p. 9. See also De Marbot.

§ Mahan, "Influence of Sea Power upon History," p. 157.

age, his health had greatly failed, and not altogether in consequence of the hard life he had led, or of the shocks he had sustained. He then soliloquized thus sadly: "And then, indeed, what would they have to fear! That I should make war? I am too old. That I should rush after glory? I am gorged with it; I have wallowed in it." *

Max Müller says that, as a rule, man is meant to learn in his youth, to act in his manhood, to counsel in his advancing years, and to meditate in his extreme old age. "He ploughs with toil, and sows with care, that he may reap plentifully." †

The world has produced but few generals who can rank with Hannibal, Scipio, Cæsar, and Napoleon, because most men are born with some serious intellectual, physical, or moral disqualification; and of those whom nature has sufficiently endowed, many never get their opportunity, and perish before they can reach the summit of the ladder that leads to fame.

"Regular armies have seldom failed to produce great men, and one great man is sufficient to save a nation." ‡ But this man must be gifted with "qualities rare in their separate excellence, and wonderful in their combination." Alison said of Napoleon that he was not a great man because he was a great general; he was a great general because he was a great man. "Never was evinced a clearer proof of the truth, which a practical acquaintance with men must probably have impressed upon every observer, that talent of the highest order is susceptible of any application; and that accident or supreme direction alone determines whether its possessor is to become a Homer, a Bacon, or a Napoleon."

The Carthaginians had slain Publius Scipio and Cneius Scipio, and had destroyed two Roman armies. "When it seemed that the Roman armies were annihilated, and Spain

* Las Cases, i. p. 732. † Clausewitz, p. 28.
‡ Napier, ii. p. 227.

lost, one man, Lucius Marcius, successfully grappled with this desperate state of affairs." * For an account of how one Spartan saved Carthage, see p. 99.

On the occasion of electing consuls at a very critical phase of the second Punic war, Quintus Fabius Maximus spoke as follows:—"Any sailor or passenger can steer the vessel in a calm sea, but when a furious storm has arisen, and the vessel is hurried by the tempest along the troubled deep, then there is need of a man and a pilot. We are not sailing on a tranquil sea, but have already well-nigh sunk with repeated storms; you must therefore employ the utmost caution and foresight in determining who shall sit at the helm." †

Caius Sempronius Blæsus having brought Cneius Fulvius to trial for the loss of the army in Apulia, spoke: "Many generals had by indiscretion and ignorance brought their armies into most perilous situations; but none, save Cneius Fulvius, had corrupted his legions by every species of excess before he betrayed them to the enemy; it might, therefore, with truth be said, that they were lost before they saw the enemy, and that they were defeated, not by Hannibal, but by their own general.

"No man, when he gave his vote, took sufficient pains in ascertaining who it was to whom he was entrusting an army. What a difference there was between this man and Tiberius Sempronius! The latter, having been entrusted with an army of slaves, had in a short time brought it to pass, by discipline and authority, that not one of them in the field of battle remembered his condition and birth, but they became a protection to our allies and a terror to our enemies. They had snatched, as it were, from the very jaws of Hannibal, and restored to the Roman people, Cumæ, Beneventum, and other towns. But Cneius Fulvius had infected with the vices peculiar to slaves, an army of Roman citizens, of honourable

* Livy, xxv. 37. † Ibid., xxiv. 8.

parentage and liberal education; and had thus made them insolent and turbulent among their allies, inefficient and dastardly among their enemies, unable to sustain, not only the charge, but the shout of the Carthaginians." *

Truly, the general is the very life and soul of an army. It was Hannibal and Napoleon who crossed the Alps; their armies merely followed. "Of all that befell the Romans and Carthaginians," says Polybius, "good or bad, the cause was one man and one mind—Hannibal." On how many occasions was Napoleon the mainspring of all action! The passage of the Guadarama mountains during the forced march in pursuit of the English army, in December, 1808, is one good example. Again, it was the spirit of Blucher which inspired the army that retreated from Ligny to fight at Waterloo. When an army begins to suffer adversity and misery, the rank and file will lose confidence, murmur and complain, unless their *moral* is maintained by the officers. But if things go from bad to worse, officer after officer will succumb more or less to a feeling of utter prostration of mind and body. At such a time the general must maintain his physical and mental energy, revive hope and confidence, and rekindle a martial spirit. If he desponds, then all discipline will disappear, and the whole army will become a demoralized and disorganized mass, without sufficient strength and cohesion for any sustained effort.

The strong man who, in the hour of peril, is able to grasp and control a great upheaval or popular movement, is rarely possessed of those particular qualities that, under peace conditions, secure advancement. An officer of very active habits and of powerful physique may come to the front in war; but in times of peace, preferment necessarily goes to the hard-working and intelligent man whose patient spirit frets not under the drudgery of office routine; and, unfortunately,

* Livy, xxvi. 2. The address is continued with great force.

interest has always had and always will have more weight than merit. An officer may be ambitious, but ambition is apt to be confounded with egotism and selfishness; and yet ambition spurs us on to great deeds. An officer may be firm and resolute, but firmness may be confused with obstinacy; and independence of character is sure to give offence.

The private soldiers know us well; they are great discriminators of character and true merit. Napoleon was affable, kind, forbearing, generous, and sympathetic; and we may be sure that Tiberius Sempronius treated his army of slaves with every consideration and kindness. According to Plutarch, Alexander had a gracious manner, and was kind, considerate, and very sympathetic, even regarding the quite unimportant affairs of his friends. Polybius states that "Scipio was kind, open-handed, and courteous." Turenne, like Napoleon, was singularly considerate for the comfort and welfare of his men, generous and magnanimous to his officers, and lenient on mere errors of judgment; consequently, his troops were entirely devoted to their general. The mutual love, devotion, and sympathy between a general and his troops must be genuine; neither the one nor the other can imitate the overflowing earnestness of such powerful emotions. "This Nelson," wrote Captain Duff, who fell at Trafalgar, "is so lovable and excellent a man, so kindly a leader, that we all wish to exceed his desires and anticipate his orders." * "I had," wrote Nelson, after the battle of the Nile, "the happiness to command a band of brothers." * Compare this feeling with the want of cordiality and the ill-will towards a rude and domineering admiral who commanded off Toulon in 1744. It accounts in part for the battle having been a fiasco.*

"Personal frictions, unfortunate occurrences, misunderstandings, and errors, added to these the excitement of battle,

* Mahan, "Influence of Sea Power upon History," p. 267.

the feeling of always standing face to face with events which may bring great good fortune or unutterable disaster,—these are the powers that in war test character the most, which can only be conceived of by him who has learnt to know them." *

It is, undoubtedly, a great faculty to be able to select the right men. Napoleon himself was most happily selected for high command while quite a young man; and he in his turn was quick to recognize and appreciate talent in others. Prince Eugène and Suwarroff were at first rejected as commanders through prejudice at their personal appearance. The former was deformed. It is important to discriminate between men of merely great official capacity and those of real professional merit, bearing in mind that peace-conditions are very misleading. "Marlborough," says Lord Wolseley, "being no theorist, studied man as he met him, not as he found him described in books. A strong instinct served him in the selection of men, for he thoroughly understood the secret springs which influenced the conduct of all classes, and played deftly upon the individual idiosyncrasies and aspirations of those with whom he had to deal. When genius fails in the work of everyday life, it is from ignorance of men and of how to influence them, and from a lack of that subtle and courageously directed energy which Marlborough possessed so largely."

Méneval, Napoleon's secretary, wrote: "I shall speak of the extreme care the Emperor used to take that the regiments were commanded by brave and well-trained officers. As he knew personally all the officers, his selections were made with discernment. When with the army, and when corps were passing through Paris, the emperor held frequent reviews which were not mere ceremonial parades. He questioned the officers who were new to him, and encouraged them to

* Von der Goltz, "The Nation in Arms," p. 388.

command and to execute manœuvres in his presence. Those manœuvres that went beyond ordinary routine sometimes embarrassed officers who had not made a sufficiently deep study of their profession. Napoleon ordered these officers with whom he was not entirely satisfied to study the manœuvres, and placed them under the supervision of the colonels and generals commanding. He neglected no opportunity to satisfy himself that they had profited by this additional military instruction." *

"My great attention," said Marshal Villars, "was to know thoroughly my subordinate generals; such a one, being a bold character, is fit to lead a column of attack; such another, without being wanting in courage, is by nature cautious, he is more suited for the defence of a country. It is only by applying opportunely these different personal qualities, that one can procure and nearly always secure great successes."

Some believe that unusual circumstances afford the opportunities that make the man; but others, with less reason, consider that the man himself controls the circumstances and forces the opportunities necessary for his advancement: be that as it may, Fortune undoubtedly presents the opportunity to many who are unable to profit by it. If there had been no Charles I. and no French Revolution, there would have been no Cromwell and no Napoleon; and how many men had missed their opportunity before it came to the turn of Cromwell, and of Napoleon†. When peace is disturbed, and the passions of a people are thoroughly roused, one man rises to power; but only to give place to another, who in his turn retires from the first place, because so few can march with the

* Méneval, ii. p. 265.

† It would be wrong to judge of the true nature of men like Cromwell and Napoleon by their public actions only, because the circumstances are often so extraordinary that such men are frequently compelled to act contrary to their inclination and principles.

necessities of the times. Circumstances change, and then public opinion veers round, and therefore no man whose ideas are in any way inelastic can long represent the wishes of the majority. Lafayette is only one of the many leading men of the Revolutionary period who entirely lost their influence as soon as they lost touch with the French people; and although, for many years, Napoleon continued to represent public opinion, even he at last was living in a different world, and did not, or would not, recognize that the nation he ruled was craving for peace, and had lost sympathy with him in his great schemes for the power and glory of France.

To enable a man to emerge from the masses, the circumstances must be favourable; but once the helm in his hand, he controls the course of the vessel; consequently the history of the world, at stirring times, is really the history of one man. How differently history would have been written, had Hannibal died of his wound at Saguntum, or had Napoleon fallen at "the terrible passage of the bridge of Lodi," or when he planted the standard on the bridge of Arcola.

It may not unreasonably be asked, What had an obscure young officer like Napoleon done to show himself possessed of such high qualifications for command that, on his return from Egypt in 1799, all parties in France were drawn towards him as the only man capable of delivering the nation from anarchy, from bankruptcy, and from foreign invasion? We have only to refer to the campaigns of 1796–7. Many generals had had their opportunities in command, but the so-called army of Italy was a mere rabble, composed of men in rags, without shoes, scattered over the mountains; officers and men alike in abject misery, half-starved, without pay, no discipline, no cohesion, no confidence, no warlike spirit: mutiny, pillage, and desertion the order of the day, and peculation and corruption in the administration. An almost

unknown young man of twenty-seven was sent to command this heterogeneous mass. So far from being welcomed, every man's hand was against him. He was scoffed at as a mathematician, a theorist, a dreamer of dreams. Old and experienced generals contested his authority, discussed and ridiculed his proclamations and orders of the day; and when he used thrilling words to the men inviting them to follow him from the arid and inhospitable mountains down to the fertile plains—from misery and hunger to honour, glory, and plenty—the soldiers jeeringly asked for shoes to enable them to march.

What had this young general to support his pretensions? He was without prestige, without money, or resources of any kind. His only stock in trade was his own firm character, immense energy and capacity for work, and a knowledge of men and affairs acquired by patient laborious study, supplemented by a little practical experience. In an incredibly short time, and with infinite patience, out of chaos he fashioned an instrument of war; he breathed into it his spirit; enforced his authority; organized everything; established discipline; suppressed disorders; and then wielded this instrument with such skill, prudence, and audacity, that his generalship, in the campaigns that followed, is the admiration of all students of war. In a word he had proved himself infinitely superior to all who had gone before, and to all who followed after, because later, during his absence in Egypt, the victorious army of Italy was ignominiously driven back to the frontier. In 1799, there appeared to be no hope of salvation for France, unless a ruler of men should descend from the skies. When all seemed lost, General Buonaparte escaped from Egypt, and appeared on the scene, and was welcomed as one sent from heaven; and as his fame had already eclipsed that of all living men, it was only natural that the whole nation should call him to the helm at a

time when they had well-nigh sunk in the fierce storms that were wrecking the unhappy country.

It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that the greatest generals sometimes make mistakes and err in judgment. "Speak to me of a general who has made no mistakes in war," said Turenne, "and you speak of one who has seldom made war." * Some one had the temerity to ask Turenne why he had lost the battle of Marienthal. "Through my own fault," answered the marshal; "but," added he, "when a man has made no faults in war, he has not made war long." On another occasion Turenne remarked that "the most skilful are those who make the fewest mistakes." †

Again, "This danger could not have escaped the Emperor, yet his military judgment, unerring in principle, was false in application; because men measure difficulties by the standard of their own capacity, and Napoleon's standard only suited the heroic proportion." ‡

Napoleon observed "that all generals were liable to err, and that whoever committed the least number of faults should be esteemed to be the greatest, and that Wellington had committed them as seldom as most others." § Napoleon said to Sir Hudson Lowe, "In the practice of war, the game is always with him who makes the fewest mistakes." Sir Hudson remarks, "It struck me as if he was reproaching himself with some great error." ||

The mistakes of great generals are generally due to want of information regarding the enemy. All men will err, but he is greatest who is quickest to rectify his errors before the consequences are irreparable.

A commander should be judged not so much by his failures as by the difficulties he has surmounted and the successes he

* Napier, ii. p. 208. † "Mémoires," p. 5. ‡ Napier, ii. p. 324.
§ O'Meara, ii. p. 289. || Forsyth, i. p. 140.

has achieved. Frederick, for example, surmounted so many difficulties and achieved so many successes, that they overlie his failures, his errors in judgment, and the faulty strategy which led him, time after time, to risk annihilation. He writes: "In laying down rules for battles, I do not maintain that I have not often inadvertently erred; but my officers must profit by my faults, and know that I shall apply myself to correct them." * In another place he says that he committed several faults, but that he had also scored some good strokes. † "I have so often in my life been mistaken," said Napoleon, "that I no longer blush for it." ‡

The general is the most important factor in an army, for good or for evil. This fact does not always receive sufficient consideration; yet history records many ignominious defeats when veteran troops have been commanded by incompetent leaders, and many brilliant victories when indifferent troops have been handled by skilful commanders. In 1812, when Ney had performed prodigies of valour with a shattered remnant of the Grand Army, and had cut his way to Orcha through the Russian army, Napoleon remarked, "Better is an army of deer commanded by a lion, than an army of lions commanded by a deer." § Before blaming the troops for a defeat, the conduct of the generals should be carefully examined. ‖ "There can be no doubt," says Polybius, "that the greater number of failures are due to the folly or carelessness of the leaders." ¶

In 1796 Napoleon assumed command of an unclothed and unfed rabble, and yet he won extraordinary victories, and drove the Austrians out of Italy; but during his absence in Egypt these same troops were everywhere routed, and driven

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiii. † Ibid., Art. xxiv.
‡ Corr. de Nap., xi. p. 162. § Abbott, p. 411.
‖ See pp. 44, 112. ¶ Book ix. 12.

back into France by the Austrians. Take the campaign of 1813, when Napoleon won victory after victory, and his troops seemed to be invincible; but the same troops, when under his marshals and engaged with the same enemy, were so often and so heavily defeated that the French had eventually to evacuate Germany and fall back on Paris.

With the best intentions it may be difficult to select the ablest generals; but considering how vast are the interests involved and how terrible the consequences of failure, it is of paramount importance that those generals should be selected who are apparently the best fitted to command, and that neither interest, seniority, nor any other consideration should affect the choice. Even with the utmost care some unfortunate selections are sure to be made, because the test of actual war is necessary to establish the reputation of a commander.

"With a subtle skill did Soult take his ground of battle at Orthes; fiercely and strongly did he fight, and wonderfully did he effect his retreat across the Luy de Bearn; but twice in twenty-four hours he neglected those happy occasions which in war take birth and flight at the same instant: and as the value of his position, essentially an offensive one, was thereby lost, a slowness to strike may be objected to his generalship. Yet there is no commander, unless a Hannibal or a Napoleon, surpassing human proportions, but will abate something of his confidence and hesitate after repeated defeats; Soult, in this campaign as in many others, proved himself a hardy captain full of resources. Wellington, with a vastness of conception and a capacity of arrangement and combination equal to his opponent, possessed in a high degree that daring promptness of action, that faculty of inspiration for suddenly deciding the fate of whole campaigns with which Napoleon was endowed beyond all mankind. It is this which specially constitutes military genius. For so

vast, so complicated are the combinations of war, so easily and by such slight causes are they affected, that the best generals do but grope in the dark, and they acknowledge the humiliating truth. By the number and extent of their fine dispositions, then, and not by their errors, the merit of commanders is to be measured." *

* Napier, vi. p. 116.

THE THEORY AND THE PRACTICE OF WAR.

THOSE who would pass from the theoretical to the practical knowledge of war must cross the field of battle—there is no other way;* but by study, by reflection, and by practice under peace-conditions, a theoretical knowledge of war can be acquired, sufficiently sound to guide us clear of many disastrous mistakes when the business of real war has commenced.

"Some people think that theory is always on the side of prudence. That is false. If theory could give advice in the matter it would counsel the most decisive, consequently the boldest action, as that is most consistent with the nature of war; but it leaves to the general to choose according to the measure of his own courage, spirit of enterprise, and self-confidence. Let us choose, then, according to the measure of these inner powers, always remembering that there never was a great general who was wanting in boldness."†

"The art of war is only learned in battles. If this maxim does not always apply to great captains whose genius is innate and depends more on inspiration than experience, it is strictly true with regard to the common soldiers."‡ Napoleon and St. Cyr, in conversation in 1813, were agreed that the value

* "War is only learnt by going under fire," wrote Napoleon to Jerome ("Napoléon Intime," p. 293).

† Clausewitz, vol. iii. p. 98.

‡ Lanfrey, iii. p. 151.

of experience and practice * to a general was much over-rated as the best school for learning the art of a commander, and the Emperor added "that he knew but one general who had constantly gained by experience, and that was Turenne, whose great talents were the result of profound study." Von Moltke may be compared with Turenne. There are many, Napoleon himself included, who consider that his first campaign in 1796 was his *chef d'œuvre* in war. Cromwell is a remarkable instance of a great general who had had neither experience of war nor practice in command.

That Napoleon's opinion of Turenne was not hastily formed is proved by his stating on another occasion that Turenne was a man who by laborious study of the art of war had formed himself into a great general. "Turenne," said the Emperor, "had improved himself only by means of great pains and by dint of instruction." † "Past masters in any art do not fall from the skies; every one makes mistakes at first." ‡

Napoleon was doubtful if he had done right in making Marmont a marshal. He wrote to him: "You have much intelligence, but for war it is necessary to have certain qualities which you still lack, and these you should strive to acquire." § The first quality in a general-in-chief, said Montecuculli, is a thorough knowledge of war; this is acquired by experience and is not intuitive, for one is not born a great captain; one develops into it. ‖ This does not mean that an ordinary man can develop into a great captain, but rather that the born soldier must make an effort to acquire the necessary knowledge, or even he will not develop into a great captain.

Frederick relates how through the favour of Fortune he surprised the enemy before the battle of Molwitz in 1741, but he adds: "I had not at that time sufficient knowledge of war

* See p. 12. † Las Cases, ii. p. 439. ‡ Kraft, "Infantry," p. 125.
§ Méneval, ii. p. 410. ‖ "Notes des Maximes de Guerre."

to know how to profit by my success." He then proceeds to point out his own shortcomings, and he is persuaded that the Austrian army might have been entirely defeated.* It is only men who are ignorant of the art of war who see no necessity for study. Some men profit much more by experience than others. Steinmetz neglected to reconnoitre at Gravelotte, but made the unwarranted conjecture that the French left wing was retreating. He gave orders for an immediate pursuit by cavalry, artillery, and infantry, who, after crossing the Mance Ravine, were defeated with severe loss. Steinmetz had learnt nothing from similar errors at Spicheren.

If Napoleon could suddenly return to command the French armies in a great war, at first he would be at a great disadvantage from ignorance of details, and of innovations that have so greatly modified and affected all military operations since the days when he dazzled the world as a master of war. The information he would seek might fairly be called theoretical knowledge, and we may be sure that, before taking the field, this great general would eagerly desire an opportunity to study every change, for no man was ever more impressed with the importance of study than he was. "Read," he said, "and re-read the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Gustavus, Turenne, Eugène, and of Frederick; take these men for your models. That is the only way to become a great captain and to discover the secrets of the art of war. Your genius, enlightened by this study, will cause you to reject maxims opposed to those of these great men." †

It is true that the proportion of men who could successfully carry out a campaign is small compared with the number who could draft the plan of operations for it; yet theoretical study with maps, and the consideration of tactical problems

* "Instructions pour ses généraux," Art. xxii.

† "Maximes de Guerre," lxxviii.

on the ground, though they cannot create talent for war, undoubtedly improve the aptitude to readily comprehend and to promptly deal with a military situation. In fact, sound theory based on reflecting study should act as a guide in practice, correct extravagant ideas, and develop the faculties of discernment and appreciation. But, at the same time, theory must never be allowed to override practice, or lead a man to think of his books when he ought to be acting.

Frederick, seeing the defects of his officers in peace and in war, introduced classes for military instruction. Military education and training induce certain habits and customs which in course of time become crystallized into instinct; and we must not overlook the fact that many men in the stress of battle act by habit and instinct, for they are too perturbed by the terrible sights around them to be capable of calm reflection or deliberate calculation. The mere theorist is apt to regard such an assertion with contemptuous incredulity, but it is nevertheless true.

It is frequently stated that it is unreasonable at examinations to require officers to consider the action of a force much more considerable than one they are the least likely to command for years to come; but it must be borne in mind that they are not asked to actually command such a force, which would be beyond their training and experience. They are merely asked to apply their knowledge of tactics under far simpler conditions than would be involved in actually commanding the forces they are dealing with. A subordinate officer is certainly far removed from the command of the army of which his tactical unit forms a part, but it is very necessary that he should grasp the general principles upon which the officer in command is directing his operations; not to be able to do so would prevent all intelligent co-operation with the guiding idea, and might lead to a dangerous local

initiative tending to dislocate seriously the general arrangements in the attack or in the defence of a position.

Philopœmen, prætor of Achaia, and a contemporary of Hannibal and of Scipio Africanus, was considered "the most consummate general among the Greeks in that age." Livy relates:—*

"Philopœmen was possessed of an admirable degree of skill and experience in conducting a march, and choosing his station; having made these points his principal study, not only in time of war, but likewise during peace. Whenever he was making a journey to any place and came to a defile where the passage was difficult, it was his practice, first, to examine the nature of the ground on every side. When journeying alone, he meditated within himself; if he had company, he asked them, 'If an enemy should appear in that place, what course ought he to adopt, if they should attack him in front; what, if on this flank, or on that; what, if on the rear; for he might happen to meet them while his men were formed with a regular front, or when they were in the loose order of march, fit only for the road.' He would proceed to examine, either in his own mind, or by asking questions, 'What ground he himself would choose; what number of soldiers, or what kind of arms (which was a very material point) he ought to employ; where he should deposit the baggage, where the soldiers' necessaries, where the unarmed multitude; with what number and what kind of troops he should guard them, and whether it would be better to prosecute his march as intended, or to return back by the way he came; what spot, also, he should choose for his camp; how large a space he should enclose within the lines; where he could be conveniently supplied with water; where a sufficiency of forage and wood could be had; which would

* Livy, Book xxxv. 28.

be his safest road in decamping next day, and in what form the army should march?' In such studies and inquiries he had, from his early years, so frequently exercised his thoughts, that, on anything of the kind occurring, no expedient that could be devised was new to him."

Wellington told General Shaw Kennedy that "he had always made it a rule to study for some hours every day." Polybius, writing of Scipio as a general, refers to his "untiring diligence." And it is a well-known fact that Cæsar, Turenne, Frederick, Napoleon, and Von Moltke studied deeply and constantly the art of war. In the instructions that Frederick dictated for his generals he states that he had in part paid dearly for his experience and knowledge of war, and in part he had learnt from the experience and teachings of great generals. Napoleon said: "I believe that Frederick is one of those who understood best the art of war."* Again, when Napoleon was dying, he dictated as follows:—"Let my son often read and reflect on history. This is the only true philosophy. Let him read and meditate on the wars of the greatest captains. This is the only means of rightly learning the science of war. But all you may say to him, or all he may learn, will be of little value to him if he has not, in the depth of his heart, that sacred fire and love of good which alone can effect great things."

"Knowledge of grand tactics," says Napoleon, "is only acquired by experience, and by the study of the campaigns of all the great captains. Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Frederick, as well as Alexander, Hannibal, and Cæsar, all followed the same principles. To keep all their troops in hand, not to be vulnerable at any point, to move rapidly on the important points—such are the principles that insure victory."† "One only becomes a great general," said the Archduke Charles, "with long experience and a taste for

* Rémusat, i. p. 334. † "Maximes de Guerre," lxxvii.

study. It is not sufficient what one sees one's self; for what man gets the opportunity of a universal experience?" *

"The little experience I have acquired of war," says Frederick, "has taught me that one cannot entirely master this art, and that in studying it with application, one will always discover some new thing. I shall not think my time badly employed, if this work excites in my officers the desire to meditate on a profession which will offer them the most brilliant career and opportunities to acquire glory and an immortal renown." †

To paraphrase Lord Wolseley:—"Although I believe that the highest order of military genius is a gift from the Creator, it is, I think, the wildest fallacy to imagine that the innate powers alone have ever made a man a great general. It is only by a deep study of military history, of the military arts and sciences in all their phases, that the heaven-born genius can be converted into the successful general. *Moore and Wellington were the only English generals in their time of any eminence, and they were the only two we know of that had made military history their study.* All those who will be remembered as successful generals in the American Civil War were graduates of West Point Military College. It cannot be too forcibly impressed upon all who aspire to high military positions, that no amount of inborn genius, unless accompanied by deep and thoughtful study, can ever secure them success." ‡

Those who are still credulous of the necessity for laboriously studying the art of war should read the way the war was conducted, by both sides, at the outbreak of the American Civil War, to learn how entirely principles can be violated by men of acknowledged shrewdness, sagacity, and ability,

* "Notes des Maximes."

† "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxvii.

‡ *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius."

who, without the necessary training, attempt to direct military operations. In 1870–71, history repeated itself in Gambetta, who, notwithstanding his extraordinary energy and capacity, again proved that war is an art in itself, and not different from all other arts in demanding years of patient thought and application if a man is to attain to any reputation for skill. In 1870–71, the French waged war on a huge scale, but it was a war in which brave men fought for their country at every disadvantage, because there was no generalship to direct their efforts in accordance with the art of war.

Referring again to the ancients, we find Polybius giving his reasons why practical men should study history. He himself was a wise, practical, and experienced man of the world. He was the intimate friend of Philopœmen; he witnessed the destruction of Carthage and the sack of Corinth; he knew Rome and Roman armies well; he played a leading part in the affairs of the world; he knew and had conversed with the chief actors in the stirring events of the times. And what does this Polybius say? "There are two roads to reformation for mankind, one through misfortunes of their own, the other through those of others: the former is the most unmistakable, the latter the less painful. One should never, therefore, voluntarily choose the former, for it makes reformation a matter of great difficulty and danger; but we should always look out for the latter, for thereby we can, without hurt to ourselves, gain a clear view of the best course to pursue. It is this which forces us to consider that the knowledge gained from the study of true history is the best of all educations for practical life. For it is history, and history alone, which, without involving us in actual danger, will mature our judgment and prepare us to take right views, whatever may be the crisis or the posture of affairs."* In

* Polybius, i. 35.

other words, we should profit by the experience of others instead of buying our own dearly.

Every schoolboy is familiar with the lofty courage of that intrepid hero, Wolfe, "yet so far from despising, like most English officers of his day, the studious and theoretical branch of his business, his reading was so extensive that he was universally regarded as a high authority on military education and military literature." *

Here, then, we have the dicta and the example of the greatest generals of ancient and modern time, emphasizing the importance of the study of theory. Like many others who might be quoted, these great Captains fully appreciated the force of the old adage that "knowledge is power," and illustrated it in their own lives by their habits of constant study and reflection. But there are officers who pose as practical soldiers, and affect to despise all theory. These, however, are generally ignorant and obstinate men who know as little of the practice as they do of the theory of war. What guarantee can they offer that they would not make similar mistakes in war to those they make under peace-conditions? Is it at all likely that their skill and judgment will be increased by the distraction of insufficient and misleading information, by the disturbing influence of personal danger, or by the immense responsibilities of actual war? Even if we grant such men the possession of some talent, how can we be sure that they will not "some day find themselves compromised on service from want of knowledge, not from want of talent"?

Napoleon said: "When ignorance causes ten men to be killed when two would have sufficed, is it not responsible for the blood of the eight others?" "An ignorant officer," says Sir Charles Napier, "is a murderer. All brave men confide in the

* Bradley, p. 213.

knowledge that he pretends to possess, and when the death-trial comes, their generous blood flows in vain. Merciful God! how can an ignorant man charge himself with so much bloodshed! I have studied war long, earnestly, and deeply, and yet I tremble at my own deficiencies." The frightful losses on the right flank of the Germans at Gravelotte were entirely due to the utter ignorance of the art of generalship on the part of Steinmetz, who made an unnecessary direct attack, devoid of all skill, on the French left flank.

"The military art," says Napoleon, "is an art which has principles that it is never permitted to violate." *

There are certain principles of war which the experience of the great generals of all ages has recognized as unchanging and unchangeable. These principles are few and simple, and are not affected by improvements in weapons, in communications, in organization or administration; but the manner of applying them varies. Battles, it is true, have been won in violation of all principles, but only because the opposing generals have committed grosser errors, or because the fortune of war, or some unforeseen occurrence, has ruled the situation. However, chances of this kind cannot be reckoned upon. Although the principles are few and simple, yet they are not so easy to detect and assimilate as is sometimes supposed; otherwise, why are they so frequently violated in the practice of war, whether it be conducted on a large, or on a small scale? An intelligent study of the military literature of any period will teach an officer to appreciate the risks of departing from well-established principles, and will aid him to apply them to strategical and tactical problems of his own time, notwithstanding that recent inventions and improved weapons have modified the conditions of modern fighting. Whether an officer in actual war will always

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 66.

correctly apply his theoretical knowledge depends largely upon his temperament and upon his moral qualities.

Lord Wolseley says, "We must closely study in the history of recent wars what battles are really like, how they are conducted, how they are lost and won, and train our soldiers for those new conditions." When there has been a marked success associated with the violation of an established principle, we should not rush to the conclusion that it was right to violate the principle, but rather we should examine the relations between the cause and effect, and between the means and end, in this particular instance; and by careful criticism arrive at the true cause of the success which will invariably not be found to be the violation of a maxim of war.

Captain Mahan considers that the inefficiency and widespread misbehaviour of the English captains at the battle of Toulon in 1744, are "a lesson to *military* officers on the necessity of having their minds prepared and stocked by study of the conditions of war in their own day, if they would not be found unready, and perhaps disgraced, in the hour of battle." Eleven out of twenty-nine captains had charges preferred against them. "There is not in modern naval history," says Captain Mahan, "a more striking warning to the officers of every era, than this battle of Toulon. Coming as it did after a generation of comparative naval inactivity, it tried men's reputations as by fire. Its most important result was to bring out the merit of Captain Hawke. The lesson is the danger of disgraceful failure to men who have neglected to keep themselves prepared, not only in knowledge of their profession, but in the sentiment of what war requires. The average man is not a coward; but neither is he endowed by nature with the rare faculty of seizing intuitively the proper course at a critical moment. He gains it, some more, some less, by experience or by reflection. If both have been lacking to him, indecision

will follow—either from not knowing what to do, or from failure to realize that utter self-devotion of himself and his command are required." *

The history of some of the wars of the Middle Ages, and even of modern times, seems to prove that when there has been a long peace and men have not devoted their talents to the study of the art of war, it becomes, for the time being, a lost art, and armies engage in battle without generalship, which has to be acquired by bitter experience, and at the cost of oceans of blood. No modern general has ever excelled some of the ancients in their knowledge of men, of human nature, and of the art of war. We may always safely take the great Greek and Roman leaders as models.

There have been men—Cromwell was an example, and let him stand alone in his glory—who have risen to highest fame, whose military education, in the sense that we now understand it, was of the scantiest, and whose training in the art of war was confined almost exclusively to its practice in the actual theatre of operations; yet surely it is as dangerous as it is presumptuous to quote such extraordinary precedents as excuses for ourselves to despise, or to neglect that earnest study of theory, as illustrated by the campaigns of the past, which the greatest soldiers have all declared to be essential. The man who is gifted with genius and with inspiration is born, not made, but even he—Napoleon was an instance—may improve his knowledge of the science of war by reading and reflection.

Clive was "born with an undoubted genius for war, but he never received that training which would have made him a great general. He was no consummate master of the art of war like Marlborough, Napoleon, or Wellington. There is little trace of skilful combination in his plans, and on some

* Mahan, "Influence of Sea Power upon History," p. 266.

occasions he appears to have neglected the most obvious military precautions. To seek the enemy, and, on finding him, to attack with headlong valour, seems to have been his guiding principle, and his successes were due rather to his personal intrepidity, and to his power of inspiring large masses of men with confidence, than to studied plans or dexterous manœuvres."* Lord Chatham spoke of Clive as a heaven-born general, who had never learned the art of war. But does not this want of training and study of the art of war in a great measure account for the fact, that no uneducated man has, in modern times, come forward as a great conqueror? The complicated conditions of modern war make it impossible; nor are they favourable to such phenomena as boy-generals, like Alexander.

"If a man is not born with talent for war, he will never be more than an ordinary general. Application rectifies the ideas, but it never gives the soul—that is the work of nature." † It is exactly the same in other professions. The great man cannot be elaborated by any human agency. But it is no argument against study, that no amount of application and no amount of Parliamentary experience can transform an ordinary man into a statesman of the calibre of Pitt. In the same way, an ordinary man cannot hope to perform the feats of a Hercules, but that is no reason why he should not strengthen himself by physical exercise.

Lannes and Suchet may be taken as examples of very distinguished commanders—not heaven-born generals—who learnt their lessons on the field of battle, but the circumstances were peculiarly favourable; the spark of genius was already in them, and it was readily fanned into flame by opportunity.

Napoleon said, "With Lannes, at first, his courage

* Wilson. † Marshal Saxe.

surpassed his knowledge, but day by day his intelligence rose to the level of equilibrium. He had become very superior when he perished—I took him a pigmy, I lost him a giant. Of another, whom he named, "His understanding, on the contrary, surpassed his character. I could not certainly deny him courage; but, after all, he calculated every risk he ran, as many others do. Suchet was one in whom the character and the understanding had increased to a surprising degree." *

Some men, from natural defects, or by reason of their training, are so unpractical as to imagine that the operations of war are always reducible to exact arithmetical calculations, based solely on numbers.† They overlook the fact that the most perfect arrangements may fail in execution from some unforeseen occurrence,‡ such as a shower of rain, a frost, an untimely thaw, a fog, cloudy weather, an accident to a messenger,§ the existence of an unknown obstacle, the rise of a torrent, a stupid blunder,‖ the misbehaviour of some person, treachery, treason, a simple order disobeyed¶ or misunderstood, the absence of information, the receipt of false or misleading information, a panic, the personal feelings or jealousies of responsible persons, a surprise, or sickness. When a large Spartan army, in 428 B.C., arrived before Athens, all the plans of Pericles were upset by the plague breaking out in the city.

* Las Cases, i. p. 218.

† "In military matters two and two do not make four, unless they are brought together in concerted action" (Mahan).

‡ The breaking of Napoleon's bridge over the Danube at Essling placed him on the brink of ruin.

§ See p. 320 for examples of accidents to messengers.

‖ It is stated that Bazaine abandoned his intention of cutting his way out of Metz, to the south by the right bank of the Moselle, on the 26th August, only because they had forgotten to make the necessary bridges.

¶ MacDonald at the Katzbach. See p. 20.

There are no rigid *rules* in war, but the *principles* of the art of war should never be departed from because they are independent of time, place, circumstances, or armament. The so-called rules of war, based on the principles, like the rules of whist, are intended to guide our actions when information is wanting. Indifferent men try to play throughout by rule, whereas superior players often discard rules when information is at hand; the more the information the less they act by rule, regulating their actions by the state of the game, that is, according to the military situation. If such a general is unsuccessful, shallow critics ascribe it to his having broken the rules of war. A master of the art of war attaches the utmost importance to obtaining information, so that he may not act in the dark, but have a fair idea of the state of affairs so as to regulate his plans accordingly. Superficial critics always condemn the general who has been unfortunate; these are the men who find it so easy to criticize and to give advice when the responsibility of action rests upon another.

Except as regards the preliminaries, the plan of a battle can only be sketched out in general outline, because it is beyond the wit of man to foretell what will happen. The more our information, the more our plan may be matured; but better too little than too much detail. The general will show his skill in making unforeseen incidents work in with the general plan, remedying the effect of those that are unfavourable, and taking advantage of those that are the reverse.

"A general thoroughly instructed in the theory of war," says Jomini,* "but not possessed of military *coup d'œil*, coolness and skill, may make an excellent strategic plan, but be entirely unable to apply the rules of tactics in the presence of an enemy; his projects will not be successfully carried out, and his defeat will be probable. If he be a man of character, he

* "Art of War," p. 322.

will be able to diminish the evil results of his failure, but if he lose his wits he will lose his army.

"The same general may, on the other hand, be at once a good tactician and strategist, and have made all the arrangements for gaining a victory that his means will permit: in this case, if he be only moderately seconded by his troops and subordinate officers, he will probably gain a decided victory. If, however, his troops have neither discipline nor courage, and his subordinate officers envy and deceive him, he will undoubtedly see his fine hopes fade away, and his admirable combinations can only have the effect of diminishing the disasters of an almost unavoidable defeat.

"No system of tactics can lead to victory when the *moral* of an army is bad; and even when it may be excellent the victory may depend upon some occurrence like the rupture of the bridge over the Danube at Essling. These truths need not lead to the conclusion that there can be no sound rules in war, the observance of which, the chances being equal, will lead to success. It is true that theories cannot teach men with mathematical precision what they should do in every possible case; but it is also certain that they will always point out the errors which should be avoided; and this is a highly-important consideration, for these rules thus become, in the hands of skilful generals commanding brave troops, means of almost certain success."

Those who base their plans too much upon conjecture, overlook how often "the improbable has been found to be true;" and military history teems with examples which illustrate how easily, and often incredibly, the best-laid plans have failed in execution.

The bitter experience of the greatest general of modern times proves the truth of what has been said. "It was to-day the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. The recollection

of it had been recalled by some one; it produced a visible impression on the Emperor. 'Incomprehensible day!' he said sadly. '*Concurrence of unheard-of fatalities!* . . . Grouchy! . . . Ney! . . . d'Erlon! . . . There was nothing but ill-luck! Ah! poor France! . . .' And he covered his eyes with his hand. 'And however,' said he, 'everything that depended on skill had been accomplished! . . . *Everything only failed when everything had succeeded!* . . .'

"Soon after he said on the same subject, 'Singular campaign, where, in less than one week, I saw three times slip from my hands the certain triumph of France and the crowning of my destiny. But for the desertion of a traitor, I should have annihilated the enemy in opening the campaign. I should have overwhelmed them at Ligny, if my left had done its duty. I should have overwhelmed them at Waterloo, if my right had not failed me. . . . Singular defeat, where, in spite of the most horrible catastrophe, the glory of the vanquished has not suffered, nor that of the conqueror increased; the memory of the one will survive its destruction; the memory of the other will perhaps bury itself in its triumph!'" *

This generation has seen the introduction, for the first time in our history, of an examination in tactics; but the test is far from perfect, and it cannot be pretended for one moment that officers can be arranged in order of real practical merit by the result of any examination; yet if examinations for promotion are an evil, they are with us a necessary one.† If all officers would, of their own free will, zealously study their profession, if all reports upon their qualifications were reliable, and if training and inspections were more practical, we might

* Las Cases, i. p. 726.

† In Germany, with a localized army, the spur of self-interest is sufficient to insure that the senior officers will interest themselves in the training of the juniors.

dispense with these examinations; but, as it is, a certain amount of compulsion is necessary, if only to meet the case of those officers who would not otherwise endeavour to improve their professional knowledge by a reasonable amount of study and reflection. Ignorance of what might easily have been learnt under peace-conditions, by even a junior officer, might cause the most serious consequences to a whole army. When Prussia declared war with Austria in 1866, many of the Prussian officers had little more than a purely theoretical knowledge of the art of war, but early and decisive victories proved that their knowledge was based on sound practical principles.

A perfect theoretical knowledge of strategy may be acquired from books; and many generals have understood its principles without being able to apply them in practice. This has been due either to extreme caution and want of enterprise, or to the lack of some other necessary qualification for high command.

"As to the special executive ability and the well-balanced penetrating mind which distinguish the practical man from the one who knows only what others teach him, I confess that no book can introduce those things into a head where the germ does not previously exist by nature. I have seen many generals—marshals even—attain a certain degree of reputation by talking largely of principles which they conceived incorrectly in theory and could not apply at all. I have seen these men entrusted with the supreme command of armies, and make the most extravagant plans, because they were totally deficient in good judgment and were filled with inordinate self-conceit." *

Theoretical tactics too, like theoretical strategy, can be learnt from books and maps; but practical tactics require troops, and must be practised on the ground. But even this is not sufficient, for, while in peace we cannot, in war we must give due consideration to many indeterminate factors

* Jomini, "Art of War," p. 345.

inseparable from our human nature with its weak and its strong emotions. An officer proficient at the war-game or at peace-manœuvres may be morally or physically unfit to direct in actual war. It makes all the difference in the world that, under peace-conditions, a commander is not oppressed by that sense of grave responsibility which must be ever present in the mind of him who feels that hundreds, possibly thousands, of human lives, and other vast issues too, depend upon the action he takes. Hence it is that men of great peace-reputation so often furnish glaring examples of the insufficiency of mere theoretical knowledge, unaccompanied by those personal qualities that cause born leaders of men, at critical times, to shine forth as stars of the first magnitude. Traditions, esprit-de-corps, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, utter weariness and misery—these are frequently ignored by the theorist; but the success of a military operation may depend upon attention to such details.

"As it is unquestionably of the greatest importance," says Jomini, "to ascertain what the enemy is about, so it is most difficult, not to say impossible, to ascertain; and this is one of the chief causes of the great difference between the theory and the practice of war. From this cause arise the mistakes of those generals who are simply learned men without a natural talent for war, and who have not acquired that practical *coup d'œil* which is imparted by long experience in the direction of military operations. It is a very easy matter for a theorist to make a plan for out-flanking a wing or threatening a line of communications upon a map, where he can regulate the positions of both parties to suit himself; but when he has opposed to him a skilful, active, and enterprising adversary, whose movements are a perfect riddle, then his difficulties begin, and we see an exhibition of the incapacity of an ordinary general with none of the resources of genius.

"I have seen so many proofs of this truth in my long life, that, if I had to put a general to the test, I should have a much higher regard for the man who could form sound conclusions as to the movements of the enemy than for him who could make a grand display of theories—things so difficult to put in practice, but so easily understood when once exemplified." *

Our faculties are developed by training, our characters formed by experience and by our surroundings, and familiarity with responsibility diminishes its burden; but certain indispensable qualities in a great commander are innate, and cannot be acquired; nor will any amount of theoretical study, nor any sort of examination reveal the possession of such gifts. Their existence may indeed be sometimes suspected, but it is only on the field of battle that they are known to be actually in a man or not. So vast is the difference between theory and practice. A man may learn the motions of swimming on the dry land, but may be quite unable to keep himself afloat in deep water.

From books we cannot learn common sense, judgment, tact, self-reliance, or a conciliatory manner, but in all these respects we can improve ourselves by practice and by intercourse with our fellow-men.

"With modern armies," says Lord Wolseley, "it is almost impossible that a man can be fit for any important command without long study and deep reflection. The higher qualifications for command can never be learnt from books, although he who is endowed by nature with the mental and physical power indispensable for an officer, can develop his ability a hundred-fold by study." † But if there are things generals cannot learn from books, there is also much necessary knowledge that can be acquired by study alone.

* "Art of War," p. 268. † "Soldier's Pocket Book."

Military history, with its graphic descriptions of actual fighting, covers the dry bones of theory with what is interesting and elevating; few officers study it sufficiently, yet what is so calculated to excite our military ardour, to supply us with valuable precedents, and to impress us with the vast difference that exists between the theory and the practice of war? Would it be possible to give a better example of this difference than the action of November 30, 1808, described by Napier?*

"Sixteen pieces of artillery, planted in the neck of the pass, swept the road along the whole ascent. At that moment Napoleon rode into the mouth of the pass. His infantry were making no progress, and a thick fog mixed with smoke hung upon the ascent; suddenly, as if by inspiration, he ordered the Polish cavalry of his guard to charge up the causeway and seize the Spanish battery. The foremost ranks were levelled by the fire of the guns, and the remainder thrown into confusion; but General Krazinski rallied them, and, covered by the smoke and the morning vapour, led them sword in hand up the mountain. As they passed, the Spanish infantry on each side fired, and fled towards the summit of the causeway; then the Poles took the battery, and the Spaniards, abandoning arms, ammunition, and baggage, fled in strange disorder.

"This exploit, so glorious to one party, so disgraceful to the other, can hardly be matched from the records of war. It is almost incredible that a position nearly impregnable, and defended by twelve thousand men, should, from a deliberate sense of danger, be abandoned to the wild charge of a few squadrons which two companies of good infantry would have effectually stopped: yet some of the Spanish regiments, so shamefully beaten here, had been victorious at Baylen a few

* See also "Mémoires du général de Marbot" for a similar account of this extraordinary feat of arms.

months before. The charge, viewed as a simple military operation, was extravagantly rash; but as evincing Napoleon's sagacious estimate of Spanish troops, and his promptitude in seizing the advantages offered by the smoke and fog which clung to the side of the mountain, it was a felicitous example of intuitive genius."

We should continuously strive to improve our professional efficiency, lest our ignorance cause loss of life to the gallant men who follow us in battle. Frederick states that had Marlborough and Eugène realized at the commencement of the battle of Malplaquet that the position could be turned by the wood on Villars's left, they would have spared the army the loss of fifteen thousand men! * Thousands of Germans fell at Gravelotte through the tactical errors of their leaders. How many an operation has been ill-directed, how many a battle has been lost, from lack of knowledge which might have been acquired from the study of former campaigns! Hundreds of examples could be given. Let us merely refer to Nelson and Brueys at the battle of the Nile. Both could have profited by a study of Hood's two engagements at St. Kitts. The former did so profit and the latter did not, or he might have avoided the defeat by following Hood's example under similar circumstances.† And, except from the study of military history, how can an officer, who is without great and varied practical experience of war, have any idea of what can be expected from troops in action, and what notion can he have of the difficulties connected with their movement, transport, and supply?

We have the example of Prussia that a sound knowledge of war may be acquired under peace conditions. The mastering of text-books, and the critical study of military history constitute the ABC of the subject. It is a step higher to apply

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxii. † Mahan.

our knowledge to the solution of strategical and tactical problems on maps with or without the war-game, and on the ground with or without troops. The conditions of the problems should not be such that all will work smoothly, but difficulties and *contretemps*, such as occur in war, should be introduced. Full information regarding the enemy should not be given, because in war there is often an absence of reliable information, although there is plenty of what is unreliable and misleading. The lack of information at Jena in 1806 led Napoleon into a false conjecture regarding the Prussians, and caused him to place Davoust in a most critical situation at Auerstädt; and it was rather Fortune than skill that saved the Emperor from a disaster that would have caused the miscarriage of the whole campaign.

If more information appears to be essential before committing ourselves to action, then a reconnaissance in force may be necessary. When the exercise does not deal with actual troops, any reasonable assumptions should be made as the result of an imaginary reconnaissance. The reasons for certain actions should be stated, and the results criticized and discussed.

To acquire skill in moving large bodies of troops, actual practice in the field is essential. Peace manœuvres teach all ranks what physical efforts are necessary, and if the weather is inclement and the transport breaks down, there may be a small experience of the hardships and miseries of actual campaigning. Only officers who have been under a heavy fire know why the moral is to the physical as three to one, but any one who earnestly wishes to understand the emotions and passions that exalt and depress men in battle may learn much from a laborious study of human nature. He must not be a recluse; he must mix freely with his fellow men, and at the same time study the biographies of the great

commanders who have swayed the wills of others. Lastly, we do not require to go to war to develop a keen observation, a capacity for drawing rapid inferences and acting upon them with prompt decision; and the same may be said of other qualities that go so far to make a leader of men.

The war-game does not seem to be popular in our service, and it is frequently asked if it is really instructive. The game has certain defects, but if properly managed it is not to be despised any more than manœuvres under peace conditions, which are open to very similar objections—that is to say, the "moral effect" and "chance" which are often the ruling factors in war are necessarily excluded from mimic warfare. But the war-game teaches thoroughly to inexperienced officers the important relation between time and distance, and affords practice in the calculations necessary for marches, and it gives junior officers an opportunity of commanding an imaginary mixed force, long before they can hope to have the chance of showing their skill in the field with actual troops. Drawing up the general and special "ideas" is excellent practice for senior officers; and facility in reading maps is acquired. Writing the necessary orders is very instructive, and much is to be learnt by making the dispositions of the imaginary troops for attack or defence, for marches or for outposts. The game also affords splendid practice in umpiring; and, after it is over, the chief umpire is expected to give his reasons for important decisions and a criticism on the operations, in fact, to deliver an impromptu lecture on tactics, which should be good practice and instructive to all concerned; and it promotes discussion.

The great difficulty is to secure a senior officer as chief umpire who is fully qualified. If decisions are not promptly given the game becomes wearisome. The war-game can give no idea of the practical difficulty of handling a large

force in the field; it cannot reveal the trouble and anxiety that must be connected with the transport and the supply of food, ammunition, etc.; there are no hardships resulting from inclement weather; the players generally know far more about their own dispositions and those of the enemy than could be the case in actual war; and finally, in peace manœuvres, and in the war-game, men will attempt to execute the most daring plans, and run risks, with a light heart, that in actual war would demand higher qualities and more force of character than is possessed by most men.

When dealing with a tactical problem, it is necessary in the first instance to understand thoroughly the conditions stated in the "general idea" and in the "special idea," and to remember that these control the general military situation. The subsidiary orders should be framed and based on the given conditions. The orders should state clearly what it is proposed to attempt, but the "general idea" should influence all preliminary dispositions, run through the whole solution, and be constantly borne in mind no matter how the action of the enemy may oblige a departure from the original conjecture as to how the battle would probably be fought. The time of day, the state of the weather, the nature of the surface of the ground and of the crops, and the season of the year, are factors which should not be overlooked even when not referred to in the conditions. Before commencing the solution of a problem, our ideas should be matured and the military situation thoroughly considered, not only from our own point of view, but also from that of the enemy; and every possible course open to either side should receive consideration. Quick decision is one of the highest qualities in a commander, but nervous hurry and flurry is another matter, and in war the latter defect is frequently the cause of those discouraging and demoralizing orders and counter-orders which are followed by

useless marches and fatiguing counter-marches. Not until a broad view of the general military situation has been taken should we concern ourselves with details.

Under peace conditions, orders are frequently issued in such elaborate detail that an officer of a timid or anxious temperament hesitates to act in any but the way indicated, or to take any responsibility on himself. This is essentially bad training, tending to stifle the development of character, self-reliance, and intelligence. The difficulty of exercising command in modern war is so great, that subordinates must be trained to act on general instructions according to the guiding idea, and on accepted principles; because between the time of issuing and receiving orders, the whole situation may be so changed that it may be neither proper nor practicable to act in the way directed. And it may often happen, especially after a disaster, that subordinate commanders receive no orders; and in such a situation, a man, accustomed always to rely upon others, will be crushed by the sudden responsibility put upon him. "We rigidly adhere to the principle," says Von der Goltz, "that in the case of an officer who has been guilty of neglect, an excuse that he has received no orders is of no avail. Passive obedience is not enough for us; not even the mere fulfilment of what is enjoined, when the occasion has demanded that more should be done."

When the concerted action of a detached force is essential to the success of a military operation, the officer commanding that force should receive specific and positive instructions as to his objective, though the details of execution should be left to him. If this course is not followed, a general may restrict his vision to his own horizon, and dreading a local disaster, he may entirely fail to afford the main army the co-operation it is entitled to expect. This happened at the commencement of the American Civil War, when Patterson, who would certainly

have obeyed a specific order, did absolutely nothing to detain the Confederate commander Johnston in the valley of the Shenandoah, when McDowell commenced his advance which terminated in the disaster of Bull Run.

In theory, soldiers who have fought well have merely "done their duty," but in practice, the highest approbation is always bestowed upon them. And who can read what soldiers have done and dared, without admitting that no praise can sometimes be too great for them? To say that, under such circumstances, they simply did their duty would be indeed to fail to distinguish between the theory and the practice of war—between the teachings of the former, and the grim realities of the latter.

The following facts are on the authority of Kinglake: The Light Brigade at Balaklava went into action with 673 horsemen. Loss in men killed and wounded, 247. Loss in horses killed, 475 (including 43 shot as unserviceable); wounded, 42. Total loss of horses killed and wounded, 517. Total unwounded horses remaining, 156. The distance to the Russian guns was about 1¼ miles. The British left only 15 unwounded prisoners, and probably these were, without an exception, men whose horses had been killed or disabled.

It is said that Lord Cardigan addressed the survivors on the field: "Men! it is a mad-brained trick, but it is no fault of mine." Some of the men answered, "Never mind, my lord! we are ready to go again."

Henderson relates that at the battle of Fredericksburg, the Irish Brigade, in their gallant attack, lost nine hundred and thirty-seven men out of a strength of twelve hundred officers and men; and it is a grim reality that their misdirected efforts served no useful purpose.

Writing of Albuera, Napier says: "Colonel Inglis, twenty-two officers, and more than four hundred men, out of five

hundred and seventy who had mounted the hill, fell in the 57th alone; and the other regiments were scarcely better off, not one-third were standing in any. . . . The fusilier battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships; but suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed on their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. . . . The horrid piles of carcasses within their lines told with dreadful eloquence who were the conquerors; and all that night the rain poured down, and the river and the hills and the woods resounded with the dismal clamour and groans of dying men. Beresford was oppressed with the number of his wounded; they far exceeded the sound amongst the British soldiers, and when the piquets were posted few men remained to help the sufferers."

Is there a more graphic account of the bravery of the British soldier, or a more vivid picture of actual war, than Napier's description of Badajos? "Then the soldiers eagerly made ready for a combat, so fiercely fought, so terribly won, so dreadful in all its circumstances, that posterity can scarcely be expected to credit the tale; but many are still alive who know that it is true. . . .

"Five thousand men and officers fell in this siege, and of those, including seven hundred Portuguese, three thousand five hundred had been stricken in the assault, . . . more than two thousand at the breaches. . . . Let it be considered that this frightful carnage took place in a space of less than a hundred yards square;—that the slain died not all suddenly nor by one manner of death; that some perished by steel, some by shot, some by water; that some were crushed and mangled by heavy weights, some trampled upon, some dashed to atoms by the fiery explosives; that for hours this destruction was endured without shrinking; and the town was won

at last. Let these things be considered, and it must be admitted a British army bears with it an awful power. And false would it be to say the French were feeble men; the garrison stood and fought manfully and with good discipline, behaving worthily: shame there was none on any side. Yet who shall do justice to the bravery of the British soldiers; the noble emulation of the officers?" *

In conclusion, it must be admitted that active service is *the* school of war. Napoleon himself has said, "In order to have good soldiers, a nation must be always at war:" † and there is no doubt, the longer the peace, the more theoretical becomes the training of an army, and the greater the general desire for ease and comfort. Yet, while on the one hand we cannot always be at war, on the other, we can do a great deal by the systematic study of its theory in peace-time to prepare ourselves for its effective practice when our turn shall come. We have seen that this was the course consistently followed, and earnestly recommended, by the most celebrated warriors of the past; and by industriously and conscientiously modelling ourselves on them, we shall be doing what we can to find out the secrets of the art of war, and become great generals.

* Badajos, Napier, iv. p. 112.' † O'Meara, i. p. 161.

THE FORTUNE OF WAR.

How often do we not hear the expression used—"Nothing should be left to chance"! And, in the sense that it behoves a commander to take every reasonable precaution in his power to ensure the success of his plans, the observation is a just one. "I shall do my best," wrote Wolfe, "and leave the rest to Fortune." Yet who can foretell what the "Fortune of War," on any given occasion, may ordain? When everything has been arranged that genius can inspire, and that skill and forethought can suggest, how much must always still depend upon "chance," an indeterminate factor that enters largely into all the problems of war, and which no general can afford to ignore.

There is no undertaking which is so uncertain, and so dependent on "chance," as war; and a trifle may upset the most skilful plans. Polybius in his histories repeatedly refers to the part played by Fortune; "for it is quite the way of Fortune to confound human calculations by surprises, and when she has helped a man for a time, and caused her balance to incline in his favour, to turn round upon him as though she repented, throw her weight into the opposite scale, and mar all his successes." *

War is not an exact science; it is rather a game of chance in which courage and skill count for a good deal. All a

* Book xxix. 22.

general can do is to leave as little as possible to chance. The best players cannot always save their stakes.

At Spicheren, throughout that long protracted battle, Fortune over and over again offered chances to Frossard, but he had neither the skill nor the resolution to profit by them. On the contrary, Napoleon in 1812, 1813, 1814, and 1815 repeatedly showed extraordinary skill and resolution, but Fortune over and over again thwarted him, and favoured his enemies. In 1814, an intercepted despatch prevented a great victory, and changed it into an indecisive action at Brienne and a defeat of Napoleon at La Rothière. At Soissons, Fortune dangled the prize of victory but would not allow Napoleon to grasp it, because the commandant, without necessity, surrendered this fortress on which the Emperor was driving back the defeated Prussians under Blucher.

What was it but "chance" that warned Sir John Moore in December, 1808, of the trap into which he was marching, when, intent on attacking Soult in the valley of the Carrion, he was quite unaware that Napoleon in person, with fifty thousand men, including the Imperial Guard and the flower of his army, was hurrying up from the south, and cutting in on his lines of communication with Portugal and Galicia? "Our cavalry scouts are already at Benevente," the Emperor wrote to Soult. "If the English pass to-day in their position they are lost: if they attack you with all their force, retire one day's march; the farther they proceed the better for us. If they retreat pursue them closely." This despatch expresses Napoleon's view of the situation, and his certainty of triumph. What was it, then, that saved the English in this crisis, and rendered the retreat to Corunna possible? The answer is—Chance! A happy chance! The Fortune of War! A brawl in a wayside inn led to the officer being killed who was carrying the Emperor's despatches to Soult, and through this

pure chance they fell into the hands of a British officer who chanced to be present, and bought the despatches for twenty dollars. In this way the danger of his position was revealed to the British general just in time to save himself from complete destruction, by a timely retreat. And, further, had that retreat been pressed by the Emperor himself, it is impossible not to conjecture that it might have had some issue more disastrous to the British arms. But surely it was the Fortune of War—the good fortune for us—that at this juncture, news from home that "the Austrian storm was ready to burst" should have induced Napoleon to make over the supreme command to Soult, and hurry back to France, taking his Guard with him?

Again, Hasdrubal with a large army was decisively defeated and slain, the result of a written despatch to his brother Hannibal chancing to fall into the hands of the Roman general. In 1814, "it was through a despatch from Napoleon to the Empress, intercepted near Châlons by the Cossacks, that the allies were informed of the plan he had formed of falling upon their communications with his whole disposable force, basing his operations upon the fortified towns of Lorraine and Alsace. This highly-important piece of information decided Blucher and Schwartzenberg to effect a junction of their armies, which the plainest principles of strategy had never previously brought to act in concert, except at Leipsic and Brienne."* The allies then marched on Paris without fear of attack. It was at this time that the martial spirit of the marshals and the power of endurance of the nation, not of the private soldiers, gave way just as the prospects of victory seemed brighter.

Speaking at St. Helena, Napoleon said, "From afar people only read of the success, they ignore the situation of affairs."

* Jomini, "Art of War," p. 273. See also Méneval, iii. p. 221.

And with reference to the great battle of Hohenlinden, where no doubt the success was almost entirely due to "good luck," he added, "It was one of those great actions brought about by chance, gained without combinations. Moreau had no initiative; he was not sufficiently decided; further, he was more at home on the defensive. Hohenlinden was a scuffle—the enemy was encountered in the very middle of his operations, and beaten by the very troops that he had himself already cut off, and that he was about to destroy. The credit for it was entirely due to the soldiers and to the generals of small corps who had found themselves in the greatest peril, and had fought like heroes."* Albuera, Inkerman, Spicheren, and Beaune-la-Rolande were also "soldiers' battles."† Blenheim and Austerlitz, on the contrary, were essentially generals' battles—"the triumph of genius in command, not mere valour."

Napoleon, the spoilt child of Fortune, had also his share of bad luck. It was good luck that his Egyptian expedition escaped when followed by Nelson, but it was bad luck that his fleet was afterwards destroyed through the vacillation and negligence of Brueys. Throughout his early career, notably at Marengo, Fortune adopted him as her own: but in 1812 she turned against him; in 1813 he again had bad luck; in 1814 he won brilliant victories, but his star had deserted him, and Fortune frowned upon him. In 1815 the fickle goddess seemed to smile again when she so greatly favoured his return to France; but it was only to turn against him, and even to deceive him throughout the brief campaign of Waterloo, so pregnant with examples of the Fortune of War, fair for one side, foul for the other. Never had there been a fairer chance of successful results from the most splendid energy and the most brilliant conception of a plan of campaign. But with one hand Fortune held out the certain prospect of victory

* Las Cases, i. p. 747. † See p. 101.

on the 16th and 17th of June, and even on the morning of the 18th; while with the other she made it impossible for Napoleon to avail himself of her favours, because she impaired his health at a most critical time, and associated with him lieutenants who were paralyzed when the great master was not directing their operations. Napoleon so completely outgeneraled Wellington and Blucher, that it was only through the intervention of Fortune that they escaped decisive disaster to gain later undeservedly decisive success. How could Napoleon have anticipated the desertion of a French general, at a critical phase of his operations, and one who had solicited employment from him? Was it the least likely that, through an unfortunate error, D'Erlon's corps would spend the eventful 16th of June in marching and countermarching between the battle-fields of Quatre Bras and Ligny? Was it to be supposed that the Prussians would, after their severe defeat, so loyally sacrifice their communications to join hands with the English, or, that the true line of their retreat from Ligny would not have been divined? Then came the heavy rain which delayed the advance from Quatre Bras, and the hopeless failure of Grouchy to grasp the situation and to co-operate with ordinary intelligence, or with his accustomed boldness. And thus Napoleon's bad fortune continued to the end of the campaign, to the end of his life.

"It is a remarkable feature in the decline of Napoleon's fortune," says Lord Wolseley, "that he won many battles where he only just missed the decisive success that would in all probability have restored his position in Europe. . . . The cup of success was dashed from his lips just as he essayed to drink from it." At Bautzen, Napoleon only just missed a decisive victory. Writing of this battle Lord Wolseley says: "Such are the uncertainties of war, even when waged under the personal direction of so great a captain as Napoleon." It

was the same a few weeks later at Dresden; and referring to the part played by luck in the campaign of 1813, Lord Wolseley writes: "In this campaign we read of Napoleon being on horseback at all hours, watching the enemy and reconnoitring the position for himself, personally superintending the passage of the troops and trains over rivers, and doing all that any commander in his best days could have done to avoid failure. But over and over again we find luck run against him."

In every campaign there have been incidents which no foresight could have foretold. They come into the category of the Fortune of War, and the most consummate generalship can neither avert them, nor always neutralize their effects. Take such an incident as the premature destruction of Napoleon's bridge over the Elster at Leipsic in 1813.

In the same year, in the Pyrenees—"Dispirited and worn out as his men were, Soult was in no condition to force any of these formidable defiles, defended by victorious troops, and his surrender seemed inevitable. So hopeful was the English general of such a result, that, screened by the rocks, from behind which he surveyed the whole valley, he prohibited his men from issuing forth to capture Soult himself, who was seen riding in a careless way along its bottom, lest the catastrophe should awaken the French army from its perilous dream of security, and issued the strictest orders that not a man should show himself from behind the ridge which concealed them from the enemy. At this moment, when every bosom beat high with exultation at the expected glorious trophy of their valour they were so soon to obtain, in the surrender of a whole army with a marshal of France at its head, three British marauders issued from their concealment to plunder in the valley. The sight of the red coats was not lost upon Soult, who instantly perceived the imminence of his danger. His whole army was immediately put in motion, and hurried

towards the passes leading to the Lower Bidassoa by Estevan, which they got through just before the Spaniards under Longa, or the light division, came up to close the terrible defiles. Such is war: the disobedience of orders by three soldiers saved France from the greatest calamity, and deprived England of the greatest triumph recorded in the annals of either monarchy. It soon appeared from what a fearful danger the emerging of these marauders from their retreat had delivered the French army." *

As with Hannibal so with Napoleon, Fortune turned against him, and his consummate generalship was of no avail. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Indeed, great and successful men often seem merely the playthings of Fortune, and not unfrequently she soon tires of them.

According to Livy,† but not in the opinion of Polybius, Hannibal was no believer in the God of Battles, but the great generals of all ages have been so. Cæsar made his prayers to the gods when about to engage with Pompey on the plains of Pharsalia. Much that is misleading has been written by Englishmen regarding Napoleon's belief in "destiny" or "fate," and his disbelief in the intervention of Providence.‡ "His maxim was, *The future is in the hand of God.* He said that after having made the best possible dispositions for a battle, after having foreseen everything, there was a moment when success depended no longer on him, and that he was obliged to wait for it from on high. Never did chance

* Alison, x. p. 262. † Prejudiced as a Roman.

‡ Regarding Napoleon's belief in God, see accounts of his last days; also p. 27 *ante;* and Present Day Tract, No. 67, p. 42, footnote of references. The writings of those who lived and worked with him furnish no evidence that Napoleon was a godless man. He risked much when he reinstated religion in France. Apart from his own private feelings, he must have seen that it was impossible to suppress anarchy and govern France without the aid of religion.

count for much in his calculations or plans. Before settling them he submitted them to the most minute scrutiny; every chance, even the most improbable, was discussed and foreseen. I have seen Napoleon enjoy prosperity with a keen satisfaction, but I have never observed in him any sign of astonishment. His measures were so well taken, the contrary chances so greatly reduced by his calculations and his combinations, that if anything had been capable of astonishing him, it had been the failure of plans that he had so skilfully and so laboriously arranged. He translated mentally *fortune* by God all-powerful." *

Montecuculli expressed the same sentiments. "After having followed in everything the rules of the art, after being convinced that one has forgotten nothing that would contribute to the happy success of an enterprise, it is necessary to leave the issue in the hands of Providence, and keep one's mind at rest regarding everything that it shall please God to ordain."

If full allowance be made for the striking difference in the conditions under which they lived, there is, in some respects, a remarkable resemblance in the personalities of Marlborough and Napoleon. It is probable that great generals have, to a certain extent, modelled themselves after the example of their illustrious predecessors. Marlborough had acquired, probably unconsciously, even the trick of shrugging his shoulders peculiar to Turenne, under whom he as a young man had served and with whom he was intimate. It is likely that Marlborough's character was to some extent modelled under the influence of Turenne. Although Napoleon said but little about Marlborough, he had studied his life. Great generals undoubtedly endeavour to develop in themselves the strong points that they admire in eminent leaders of men; whereas mediocre men merely copy the eccentricities and failings of greater men.

* Méneval, i. p. 427.

After this digression, the sentiments of Marlborough regarding "destiny" will be recorded, and it will be evident from a study of his religious faith, that what he intended by "destiny" was exactly the same as Napoleon implied. "As I think most things are governed by destiny," he wrote, "having done all that is possible, one should submit with patience." "There can be no doubt of the strong faith in God," writes Lord Wolseley, "which influenced his conduct from the date of his marriage onwards, though his was not an age of spiritual earnestness. He spent hours of the night before Blenheim in prayer, and, as was ever afterwards his custom, he received the Sacrament before going into action. Upon that particular occasion he said of himself, 'he believed he had prayed more that day than all the chaplains in the army.'" *

Napoleon was a great believer in Fortune. He said to Metternich, some years before Waterloo, "You do not know what strength is given by good luck! It alone gives one courage. It is only by daring that one does anything worth doing, and it is only from the feeling of good luck that one dares anything. Misfortune crushes and blasts one's mind; thenceforward one does nothing well." † "And," says Napier, "there is no commander, unless a Hannibal or a Napoleon, surpassing human proportions, but will abate something of his confidence and hesitate after repeated defeats." We have all felt the truth of the old adage, "Misfortunes never come singly." When Fortune scourges us, friends fall away; we feel we are on a downward course.

No man has uninterrupted good or bad fortune. It is instructive to read in Herodotus and in Plutarch what the wise man Solon said to Crœsus regarding the uncertainty of continued good fortune, when the latter had boasted of being the most fortunate man in the world. The sequel to the life of Crœsus

* Marlborough, chap. xci. † Bourrienne, iii. p. 288, note.

proved the wisdom of Solon in declining to admit that any man could be called fortunate and happy, until it could be known that his good fortune had followed him to the grave. It is wise for every despairing commander, who believes himself persecuted by Fortune, to know and feel that any day his luck may change. Consider the truly sad and unfortunate end of many of the greatest men in history, who, at one time or another, were envied for their good fortune.

On most occasions, Napoleon commanded the most unbounded confidence, a confidence that comes only from continued success. "In war," says Wellington, "nothing is so bad as failure and defeat." * Now, just before the great battle of Leipsic in 1813, Schwartzenberg issued a stirring proclamation to his army; "but," writes Alison, "no heart-stirring words breathed the fire of Napoleon's spirit, or announced the well-known prophecy of victory—an ominous circumstance, indicating in no equivocal manner that the Emperor's confidence in his fortune was at an end." And the rank and file also believed in Fortune—"a sombre feeling of disquietude pervaded the French army: their ancient courage was the same, their hereditary spirit was unshaken; but disaster had chilled their ardour, diminished their numbers, depressed their hopes; and their confidence in the star of the Emperor had been irrevocably shaken."

Frederick the Great was also a believer in Fortune. On one occasion a distinguished general solicited employment, and spoke at great length to impress the king regarding his experience and high qualifications. When he had done, Frederick made but one remark, "Are you a lucky man?" Frederick told his generals that if he attempted to write on the chances and unforeseen accidents that happen to a general in war the chapter would be very long.† He states that war requires not

* Napier, iv. p. 130. † See p. 68.

only skill, but good luck; and that there are unfortunate events against which neither human foresight nor the soundest reflection can avail anything. He relates how on one occasion he had made all the necessary arrangements to ensure the success of a forced march to sever the enemy's communications; but heavy rain came on, which made the roads so bad that his pontoons could not advance, and a thick fog caused such confusion that instead of arriving at four o'clock he did not arrive till noon, and consequently his project failed. In 1741 the sickness of his troops obliged him to act on the defensive, contrary to his intention. On another occasion his aide-de-camp gave an order quite different from what was intended. He warns his generals to be always on their guard, and to remember that a duty badly executed may upset their plans. If a general happens to fall ill, or if he should be killed when commanding an important detachment, the whole of your plans may be deranged. If, in spite of all your precautions, the enemy succeeds in carrying off some convoy, all your arrangements will be again disturbed, your plans upset and delayed. Again, the enemy may discover your spy upon whom you were counting. The negligence of officers sent to reconnoitre may place you in the most critical situation. Treason in an army is the greatest of all misfortunes. "It follows from all this that you must never, even in the midst of good luck, rely upon Fortune, nor become proud in success; but consider always, that whatever your intellect and your foresight, war is but a game of chance and of unforeseen accidents in which it pleases Fortune to humble the pride of men who are full of presumption." *

"It is said of Skobeleff that he consulted a fortune-teller before the war, and she foretold that he would come safely out of it. He wore, it appears, a talisman, and thoroughly believed

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiv.

in it. It would not be the first case of the kind that has occurred, for one of the finest characters in military history—the Emperor Trajan—did the same." *

At Moscow Napoleon found sufficient accommodation for his troops and ample supplies for the coming winter. All was well, but then Fortune steps in, and in a few hours the city is burning in many places. "An event," said Napoleon, "on which I could not have calculated, as there is not, I believe, a precedent for it in the history of the world." † Napoleon overlooked Madgeburg which, when taken by the Imperialist general Tilly in 1631, was deliberately reduced to cinders by the inhabitants themselves.

When discussing Napoleon's misfortunes in 1812, and on other occasions, military writers have over and over again entirely ignored the sound political and moral considerations that induced him to trust to Fortune; but he never did, as these writers suppose, overlook the military situation. He was better aware than any one else that military considerations demanded an early retreat from Moscow; but he also saw clearly that any retrograde movement would at once sacrifice all the great advantages he had good reason to expect from the negotiations with his former personal friend and constant admirer, the Czar. But Fortune had abandoned her favourite.

The great Roman dictator Sylla was a strong believer in fortune. He used to say that he was born rather for fortune than for war, and he attributed more to fortune than to valour. "Military science," says Napoleon, "consists in thoroughly calculating all the chances first, and afterwards in determining exactly, nearly mathematically, the part that luck may play. This luck remains a mystery to mediocre minds, but becomes a reality to men of very superior understanding.

* Hoenig. † "Conversation at Elba," Viscount Ebrington.

Turenne hardly gave a thought to it, and relied upon system and method. I believe," added he, with a smile, "that I should have beaten him. Condé did not suspect it more than Turenne, and it was through impetuosity that he delivered himself from it. Prince Eugène was one of those who most appreciated it. Henry IV. always put bravery in the place of everything, but he only fought small actions, and never a great pitched battle." *

The critic often awards high praise for what has been really a mere matter of chance; and in the same way, he sometimes metes out severe censure without realizing that it may be undeserved, that the general acted according to the light that was in him at the time, and that the facts on which his criticism is based were quite unknown to the commander he is criticizing, who would probably have acted very differently had he possessed the same information as his censor. It is so easy to be wise after the event. "But," writes Kinglake,† "that same present knowledge which we now have is exactly what at the time was most wanting; and of course it is no more than right that the soundness of an officer's judgment should be viewed in its relation to those circumstances only which were fairly within the range of his knowledge, or surmise, when he had to make his resolve." In criticizing military operations, many people are given to interpolating conditions quite different from the actual circumstances at the time, then, of course, the logical deduction is that the results should have been very different. In this way the merit of a successful commander is unjustly depreciated, and we are expected to believe that victory should have been defeat, and defeat victory.

Polybius quotes an old proverb: "A man may have a stroke of luck; but no man can be lucky always." A general

* Rémusat, i. p. 333. † Vol. v. p. 295.

should take all possible contingencies into consideration; he should be prepared for "bad luck," but at the same time be ready to profit by "good luck;" he is likely to have some of both. Napoleon said: "It is necessary to indulge Fortune in her caprices, and reclaim her when we can do so." *

At Salamanca in 1812, Marmont undoubtedly outmarched and outflanked Wellington in the manœuvres that preceded the battle, but in his eagerness to seize the Cuidad Rodrigo road, his left wing was allowed to get fatally separated from his centre; and Wellington, prompt to seize on the "good luck" so unexpectedly offered him, made dispositions to strike on the instant. "At last I have them!" was his emphatic exclamation; and, turning to the Spanish general, he caught him by the arm and said, "My dear Alava, Marmont is lost." And so the event proved. In the same year, and at the same place, Fortune again favoured Wellington, who this time was retreating before Soult. "The operation," says Alison, "was a very hazardous one; for, in performing it, the allied army, defiling almost within cannon-shot of the enemy, presented their flank, several miles in length, to his attack; and a daring general had the same opportunity for a brilliant stroke which had been presented to Wellington by Marmont on the same ground four months before; but in that decisive moment the star of England prevailed. A violent storm of rain, accompanied by a thick mist, came on, which for two hours rendered it impossible to see any object more than a few yards ahead; and during the interval of darkness the whole British army moved safely past the dangerous ground in three columns."

At the battle of Beaune-la-Rolande, in 1870, occurred a curious example of the fortune of war. General Voigts-Rhetz erroneously imagined that the French intended to work round his left, and on that supposition he moved his reserves from

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 172.

right to left. The plan of the French general was that the 18th and 20th corps should converge and co-operate in an attack on the right at La Rolande, but the 20th corps came into action with the reserves on the German left, and allowed itself to be unnecessarily detained, so that the combined attack did not come off, and thus the grand error of Voigts-Rhetz proved his salvation from what should have been a serious defeat.

"The circumstances of greatest moment in war seem to be the number and bravery of the soldiers, the abilities of the commanders, and Fortune, which exerts a powerful sway over all human concerns, and especially over those of war." * "In everything that one undertakes," says Napoleon, "one must allow two-thirds to judgment, and the other third to chance. Increase the first fraction, you will be timid; increase the second, you will be rash." †

In war we can only base our plans on what is probable, not on what is certain. We should leave as little as possible to chance in each particular case; but this does not mean that we should necessarily select the plan which risks least, because it may often happen that the most daring plan may really be the wisest, safest, and the most prudent; but having selected the most daring plan, we should eliminate chance as much as possible. We should always be prepared to risk something in war. "All naval expeditions," says Napoleon, "undertaken since I have been at the head of the Government, have always failed, because the admirals see double, and have learned—where, I do not know—*that war can be made without running risks.*" ‡ "We must step boldly forward into the night of uncertainty." § The most we can do is to be prepared to meet possible contingencies, so that one error need not bring

* Livy, ix. 17. † "Pensées de Napoléon," 143.
‡ Corr. de Nap., Sep. 12, 1804. § Clausewitz, iii. p, 118.

with it utter ruin. If we attach undue importance to difficulties and risks, we shall never act with energy and decision. Many a general has allowed a grand opportunity to slip through his fingers, because he could see only the dangers, risks, and disadvantages of his own situation, and the advantages of the enemy's—being totally blind to his own advantages and the dangers, risks, and disadvantages on the opposing side.

Napoleon himself has observed, "A battle sometimes decides everything; and sometimes the most trifling circumstance decides the fate of a battle."* It was a stroke of good-luck for Marlborough and Eugène, but one of ill-luck for Villars that he was wounded at a critical phase of the battle of Malplaquet. "There is a moment in all combats," says Napoleon, "when the smallest manœuvre may decide and give the superiority." † It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. And quite at the commencement of his career, writing to the Directory, he said: "Between triumph and failure there is only one step. I have observed in the most important circumstances, that a mere trifle has always brought about the gravest events."

When the Roman prætor sent a messenger to forbid the fugitive Marius to set foot in Africa, the latter replied: "Go and tell him that thou hast seen the exile Marius sitting on the ruins of Carthage." Thus holding up to the prætor the fate of that city and his own as a warning. We know that fortune changed, and Marius returned to Rome.

In the first Punic war, the Romans had been so successful that their Consul, Regulus, considered Carthage at his mercy. The Carthaginians were ready to accept almost any terms, but the consul was so harsh that the city could not suffer more if taken by storm. At this time Xanthippus, a Spartan, experienced in

* O'Meara, i. p. 193. † "Pensées de Napoléon," 8.

the art of war, and trained in Spartan discipline, arrived at Carthage, like one sent from heaven. He was elected general by acclamation, and in a few days he reorganized and drilled the military forces, and inspired them with such confidence that finally, by a wise choice of ground and by skilful tactics, he won a most decisive victory, and took Regulus prisoner. "This event," says Polybius, "conveys many useful lessons to a thoughtful observer. Above all, the disaster of Regulus gives the clearest possible warning that no one should feel too confident of the favours of Fortune, especially in the hour of success. Here we see one, who a short time before refused all pity or consideration to the fallen, brought incontinently to beg them for his own life. Again, we are taught the truth of that saying of Euripides—

'One wise man's skill is worth a world in arms.'

"For it was one man, one brain, that defeated the numbers which were believed to be invincible and able to accomplish anything; and restored to confidence a whole city that was unmistakably and utterly ruined, and the spirits of its army, which had sunk to the lowest depths of despair."

Pompey did not experience any of the vicissitudes of fortune until he was nearly sixty years of age. After his defeat by Cæsar at Pharsalia, Fortune overwhelmed him with misfortunes. When he was met by his wife Cornelia, she, with her woman's sympathy, tried to comfort him, and attributed his present unhappy condition to her ill-fortune, not her husband's. Pompey replied: "Till this moment, Cornelia, you have experienced nothing but the smiles of Fortune; and it was she who deceived you, because she stayed with me longer than she commonly does with her favourites. But, fated as we are, we must bear this reverse, and make another trial of her. For it is no more improbable that we may

emerge from this poor condition, and rise to great things again, than it was we should fall from great things into this poor condition."

And Hannibal, in conference with Scipio, is credited with the following expressions:—"Rarely does that man whom Fortune hath never deceived consider the uncertainty of events. Putting every one else on one side, I am myself a sufficient instance of every vicissitude of fortune.* In all cases, the most prosperous fortune is least to be depended upon. In nothing do events correspond less with men's calculations than in war." †

But, it may be asked, if Fortune may upset all calculations, why seek to attain to the high qualifications mentioned in the first chapter? True, luck has sometimes pulled an incompetent general through, especially in what are known as "soldiers' battles"—battles won in spite of bad generalship. But, while bad and good luck will occur to all, it is only the commander who possesses knowledge and power who will know how to combat the one and profit by the other. It is not so much that generals do not get their opportunities in war, but that disasters are nearly always the direct result of want of knowledge, and of want of qualifications for command.

* "The only method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others" (Polybius i. 1).

† Livy, xxx. 30. Polybius gives a similar account, and that Scipio agreed with Hannibal as to the fickleness of Fortune.

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MORAL EFFECT IN WAR.

WRITING to his brother Joseph in 1808, Napoleon said, "In war the moral forces are to the physical as three to one."* Let us inquire here what are the moral forces which in war are to the physical as three to one? Whence their origin? Of what are they composed? And how are they developed, fostered, and maintained?

The first of them all is undoubtedly that feeling of strength and superiority which springs from pride of race, from tradition and training, and from organization and discipline. This feeling, which includes individual courage and moral resolution, has always been characteristic of the British soldier. Courage is no doubt innate in him; and moral resolution has been developed by his training and by his surroundings; and the two together, under able leadership, have earned him in all parts of the world a reputation for "constancy in battle," second to none, and equalled by few. "For a battle," says von Muffling, "there is not perhaps an army equal to the British; that is to say, none whose tuition, discipline, and whole military tendency are so purely and exclusively calculated for giving battle. The British soldier is vigorous, well fed, by nature brave and intrepid, trained to the most rigorous discipline, and admirably well armed. The infantry resist the attacks of cavalry with great

* Napier, i. p. 452.

confidence, and when taken in the flank or rear, British troops are less disconcerted than any other European army."

This is high praise, and another foreign critic, General Foy, has said of the English soldier that "he possesses the quality most precious in war—calmness in danger." *

At Isandhlwana, in 1879, when the Zulus were closing in and the remnants of the 24th regiment were holding together in groups, in this moment of supreme danger, when every one knew the end was at hand, the British officers and soldiers were perfectly calm, there were no signs of fear or panic. †

Another striking example of perfect discipline and calm resignation was furnished by the 31st regiment, when the *Kent*, with the headquarters and five companies on board, was destroyed by fire in 1825, and seventy-six persons perished. The records of the 54th regiment describe the magnificent courage and discipline of the officers and men at the time of the burning of the *Sarah Sands*, in 1857. Their behaviour is in startling contrast to that of some seamen and of a few soldiers, who shamelessly seized the long boat, and pushing off, thought only of saving their own lives. In Greenwich Hospital is a monument erected by command of the Queen, in memory of the "heroic constancy and unbroken discipline" which officers and men displayed when, in 1852, the *Birkenhead*, with 632 souls on board, struck a rock and went down in about half an hour. Colonel Seton, of the 74th Highlanders, told the men that there were only boats enough to carry the women and children to shore, most of these were saved, but "the soldiers stood on deck in their ranks, shoulder to shoulder, officers and men together, patiently abiding the end."

Undoubtedly many men are naturally brave, and hardly

* Alison, vii. p. 323.

† Conversation with Major Smith-Dorrien, who was present.

know what fear is. But perhaps by far the greater number bravely face the dangers of a battle-field because they are fortified by training, by example, and by resolution to overcome, in the presence of the enemy and of their comrades, any natural weakness. There is also the effect of a sense of shame which often overcomes the hesitation of the weak. The greater the responsibility entrusted to a man, the greater the sense of shame, if he feels unequal to the burden. There are but few craven cowards, because there are but few men who are not moved by a sense of shame, and a dread of disgrace, if they are not moved by anything higher.

"In armies, the real reward consists in the good opinion of fellow citizens." * "The opinion of others exercises a potent influence over the affairs of men, and is a moral factor that gives birth to other moral factors."

Clausewitz considered courage to be of two kinds. First, the result of temperament, contempt of death, or habit. Secondly, the result of pride, patriotism, or enthusiasm. In the latter case it is not so much a normal condition as an impulse. In the former case the courage is more reliable. The two combined make the most perfect kind of courage. Some consider that natural indifference to danger is the highest form of courage, others consider the courage more sublime of him who realizes fully the peril, but braces himself for the ordeal. "That the immediate feeling of danger, to ourselves and others, should influence the mind is human nature." †

General Rogniat expressed the opinion, "If men are to be brave, you must make them so; because courage is not innate in us, it is an artificial and not a natural quality. We are all born timid; so it is ordained by Nature, who, in the interest of their own preservation, inspires all living things

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 25. † Clausewitz, iii. p. 169.

with a feeling of fear that induces them to avoid what may injure them; courage is the quality that enables us to overcome and conquer this feeling." Against this, however, General de Marbot made the following annotation:—"This is not true, courage is innate and fear artificial. Man likes to destroy everything that may injure him—that is the true law of nature." Men are often led into error by judging of others by themselves. The fact is that there are not two natures alike, and each general has described a particular type of man.

Marshal Saxe, the victorious hero of Fontenoy, is at variance with de Marbot and with Le Chevalier Follard; he says of the latter, "He goes too far; he puts forward an opinion, and satisfies himself of the proof, without observing that this proof depends upon an infinity of circumstances that human prudence is unable to foresee. He always assumes that all men are brave, without heeding that the valour of the troops varies from day to day—that nothing is so variable—and that the real skill of a general consists in knowing how to guard himself from the effects of such changes, by his dispositions, by his positions and by those flashes of genius that characterize all great captains. This is of all parts of the art of war, the most necessary to study." Scharnhorst expressed the same opinion as Saxe, "We should teach the soldier to know how to die, and not to fear dying. Too much of this taking cover fosters the natural cowardice that dwells at the bottom of all of our hearts." "When one has no fear of death," says Napoleon, "one causes this fear to enter the enemy's ranks." *

"Courage," says Napoleon, "is an innate quality—one cannot acquire it." † "I regard courage," says Lord Wolseley, "as the mental correlative and equivalent of perfect physical

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 29. † Ibid., 105.

health. And my experience has taught me that high courage is generally accompanied by bodily soundness." * There are, however, marked exceptions to this rule. Courage brings a wholesome tension on the nerves—and every one knows that an empty stomach slackens the nerves; so does impaired health, especially in connection with the liver. We have already referred to that rare two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage.†

"Nerve and pluck are two distinct qualities, though both belong to the genus courage. Whyte-Melville very well separates them when he says, 'The latter takes us into a difficulty, the former brings us out of it. I conceive the first to be a moral quality, the result of education, sentiment, self-respect, and certain high aspirations of the intellect; the second a gift of nature dependent upon the health, the circulation, and the liver.'" ‡

It seems difficult to suppose that courage is anything but innate, and yet undoubtedly to a certain extent it can be instilled, especially into the masses. "General Rogniat had written that the passions calculated to inspire the troops with courage were, according to his ideas, 'religious fanaticism, love of country, honour, ambition, love, desire for riches. . . . I pass over in silence glory; it appeals too rarely to the soldiers to have any influence over their courage.' We have here, it must be allowed, an opinion too metaphysical for the times in which General Rogniat wrote, and which, even if it was well founded, which I do not believe it is, was neither useful to ventilate nor wise to express."

"What!" exclaims de Marbot—"what! glory does not appeal to them, those soldiers who vowed to General Rampon that they would die with him in the redoubt of Montélésimo! Those who, seizing their arms at the call of Kléber, preferred

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Courage." † Page 5.
‡ "Hunting," Badminton Library.

a bloody battle to a disgraceful capitulation! Glory does not appeal to them, those soldiers of Arcola, of Rivoli, of Castiglione, and of Marengo, those of Austerlitz, of Jena, and of Wagram! Those thousands of brave men who rushed to almost certain death in the sole hope of gaining the cross of the Legion of Honour, were they also insensible to the appeals of glory! What did they desire then, those brave men who were the first to rush into the breach, or to pierce the ranks of the enemy's squadrons? They wished to distinguish themselves, to gain a reputation for courage, which would win the esteem of their leaders, the praises of their companions, and the admiration of their fellow citizens. If we have not there the love of glory, what is it then?"

This outburst of General Marbot was indeed both natural and just, for certainly, if ever soldiers heard and understood the language of glory, the language that inflames the mind and the imagination, and incites to great and daring deeds, they were the soldiers of Napoleon: and no man ever had a juster appreciation of the moral effect produced by such language than this great commander. Napier, "that peerless military historian," with his command of heroic language, declared himself unable to do justice to the bravery of the British soldiers! And bravery and glory go hand in hand.

When the apparition of death is in the air, strange emotions manifest themselves, and they are intensified by the anxiety and the strain induced by uncertainty, and by the constant unfolding of the unexpected upon over-wrought nerves. Each and every one feels that when the king of terrors beckons, he demands our serious attention. It is not all who have the courage to treat the signal with contempt.

"The officer who acts upon the principle that all his soldiers are equally brave will some day find out his error to his cost. Courage in a man is the highest of all virtues, and it should be

fostered in an army in every possible way." * "It is by appealing to moral faculties only," says Colonel Home, "that men can be induced to meet the danger that they must face in war." And quoting from Captain May: † "He who considers that our men are all heroes because they are derived from a brave class is very considerably mistaken. If only all soldiers of their own account would simply do their duty in battle, an army would be perfectly invincible, and would not require any tactical instruction at all." But the Prussian officer is not quite accurate; the Afghan and the Arab fanatics have always nobly done their duty in battle, but they have not been invincible because they have not been properly armed, and their attacks have been neither wisely directed nor duly supported. Napoleon's opinion on the subject has been corroborated in our wars in all parts of the world; he says: "The first qualities in a soldier are constancy and discipline; valour comes only second." ‡

The Prussian officer Hoenig, who on many occasions witnessed the terrors of the actual battle-field, says, "The fear of death is powerful enough to completely change the character of most men in a moment, and at times cannot be resisted even by the bravest. To be prepared to meet death calmly and resolutely is, perhaps, the highest demand that can be made on human nature. To expect this from all men and at all times is impossible. It is against the natural instinct of self-preservation."

No really practical soldier has asserted that with modern fire-arms bravery is of less account than it was formerly. It is probably of far more account. The strain on the nerves is as severe as ever, but prolonged a hundred-fold, so that when the crisis comes, the excited elation of the victors and the utter

* Wolseley. † Tactical Retrospect.

‡ "Pensées de Napoléon," 20.

collapse of the vanquished are often greater than in ancient battles. In the attack a brave man draws others on, the coward holds them back. In defence the brave man stands his ground and fires at the right time and at the right place, but the coward avoids exposing himself and his fire is unaimed.

"If we wish to gain an insight into the truth of things, we must take men as they are, and not as they are made to appear by a poetical imagination. It is true that there are heroes, and they exist in all classes of society. We may even say, to the honour of the human race, that they are not altogether rare; I have seen many of them. But the great mass of men are not heroic, and they have to be led up to deeds of heroism, and directed in danger."

But the poetical imagination cannot exaggerate the heroism of Leonidas and the Spartans at the defile of Thermopylæ, or of the Spaniards at Saragossa in 1809; and there have been many occasions when ordinary mortals have been inspired to behave like the heroes of Homer. Frederick considered most men to be naturally indolent, and to require to be roused up to great deeds; and undoubtedly men's military ardour may be fired. And let us not forget that sentiment and vanity play leading parts in the affairs of men.

Plutarch states that the Roman general Marius considered that "with regard to objects of terror, novelty adds many unreal circumstances, and that things really dreadful lose their effect by familiarity."

Familiarity with a particular form of danger undoubtedly goes a long way towards making a man calm and indifferent. Napoleon wrote to Marshal Lefèbre, then besieging Dantzic, "You treat our allies, especially the Poles and the Baden troops, without any delicacy. They are not used to stand fire, but they will get accustomed to it. Do you imagine

* Kraft, "Infantry," p. 195.

that we were as brave in '92 as we are now, after fifteen years of war? Have some indulgence, then, old soldier as you are, for the young soldiers who are starting in their career, and who have not yet your coolness in danger." Again, at St. Helena, Napoleon remarked, "Take one for example, Frederick, who, at the outset of his career, ran away from his own victory, and who, all the rest of his life, proved himself under fire to be the most fearless, the most stubborn, and the calmest of men." *

It is related that, at the battle of Friedland, Napoleon, seeing a young soldier instinctively bend his head at the whiz of a cannon-ball, smiled and said, "My friend, if that ball were intended for you, though you were to burrow a hundred feet underground, it would be sure to find you there." "The instinct of self-preservation, which is innate in human nature, never directly influences educated men, but speaks to their hearts under the guise of some plausible excuse, and thus gradually wins its way." †

"In newly-levied armies," says Lord Wolseley, "the instinct of self-preservation comes to view at every turn. It is only the pride of the regiment, of the county to which it belongs, of the traditions attached to it, and the sense of honour that springs from these sources, that can make the ordinary John Jones or William Smith so far disregard his personal safety as to face a deadly storm of bullets." ‡ There are many forms of courage, and it is very doubtful if any one man possesses them all. To give only one example, a man of established personal courage may be utterly devoid of fortitude or courage when death hovers over the sick bed of one who is dear to him, and his whole nervous system may then become unstrung. The great Pericles, during the siege of Athens, maintained his

* Las Cases, ii. p. 439. † Kraft, "Artillery," p. 227.
‡ *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Courage."

fortitude under bereavements similar to those of Job, but when his last son succumbed to the plague, he gave way.

Inaction is ruin to the *moral* of an army. The deterioration of Hannibal's soldiers in Capua, made the name of that city a byword. Scipio introduced a plain diet in his army, which had been nearly ruined by good living, pleasure, and luxury. "There is also a certain undefinable, but real deterioration in the *moral* of a fleet habitually in port, compared with one habitually at sea; the habit of being on the alert and the habit of being at rest, colour the whole conduct of a military force. This was keenly realized by that great commander, Lord St. Vincent, 'I will not lie here (Lisbon, 1796) a moment longer than is necessary to put us to rights; for you well know that inaction in the Tagus must make us all cowards.'" *

An ordinary man will appear sufficiently calm under fire, carry out his orders, and take his chance; but when it is a question of troops *en masse*, their behaviour in battle is affected by many complicated emotions and many conflicting forces. Such an apparent trifle as a strain of martial music, or even the state of the weather, may have a marked effect upon the animal spirits, and the men may be sullen and gloomy to-day who but yesterday carried victory on the points of their bayonets. Will they now advance, or will they retire? Has the limit of human endurance been reached? There is nothing certain in battle.

"There are situations in battle in which the hearts of men are so affected by the sense of danger, that there is an end to all manœuvring; they can move neither to the right nor the left, and can only advance or retire." † "In all battles," said Napoleon, "a time always comes when the bravest soldiers,

* Mahan, "Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution," etc.

† Kraft, "Infantry," p. 51.

after having made the grandest efforts, feel disposed to run away. This terror is caused by a want of confidence in their courage; it requires only the slightest cause, a mere pretext to restore to them their courage; the great art is to produce it." * Of this great art Napoleon was master; the mere fact of his presence was sufficient to rally his troops and restore their courage. Skobeleff, of heroic courage himself, realized the limits of endurance in others, and under his leadership the Russians fought with conspicuous bravery.

This matter of leadership is indeed of an importance that cannot be over-estimated, whether the moral or the physical effect is under consideration. "Stadion," in conversation with the Duke in 1814, observed, "that he believed that he (Wellington) had never been engaged against Buonaparte in person. The Duke answered instantly, 'No; and I am very glad I never was! I would at any time rather have heard that a reinforcement of forty thousand men had joined the French army than that he had arrived to take the command.'" † And again, "Moreover, they were commanded in person by Napoleon, of whom it has been said by the Duke of Wellington, that his presence alone was equal to forty thousand good troops." ‡

The mere fact that the Emperor in person was in the town of Krasnoi, with the Imperial Guard, during the fatal retreat from Moscow, made such an impression on Kutusoff, who had it absolutely in his power, at the time, to plant his army across the only road open to the French to continue

* Antomarchi.

† "I had heard the opinion ascribed to him before, but I was glad to find he had the liberality to repeat it after Buonaparte's fall." Miss Berry's Journal, iii, p. 16. See p. 52.

‡ Napier, ii. p. 216, referring to Moore's campaign. Frederick the Great considered Marshal Schwerin worth ten thousand men. See p. 299, Kraft, "Artillery."

their march by, that, in spite of the protests of his generals, he countermanded the dispositions he had ordered, and allowed Napoleon, with the guard, to pass through with no other annoyance than a distant cannonade. "The veterans closed their ranks round their monarch as they passed the Russian batteries, and played in the hottest of the fire the celebrated air, *Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille?*" *

At the battle of Pharsalia, Cæsar was about to attack Pompey "when he saw a trusty and experienced centurion encouraging his men to distinguish themselves that day. Cæsar called him by his name, and said, 'What cheer, Caius Crassinus? How, think you, do we stand?' 'Cæsar,' said the veteran, in a bold accent, and stretching out his hand, 'the victory is ours. It will be a glorious one; and this day I shall have your praise either alive or dead.' So saying, he ran in upon the enemy, at the head of his company, which consisted of one hundred and twenty men. He did great execution among the first ranks, and was pressing on with equal fierceness, when one of his antagonists pushed his sword with such force in his mouth that the point came out at the nape of his neck." †

The effects produced in war by moral causes, often only very slight causes, are sometimes prodigious—fortunate the general who can control such a mighty power. That Alexander, Hannibal, Scipio, Cæsar, Cromwell, Napoleon, and other great leaders possessed this ascendency over the minds of men is well known.‡ They rode the whirlwind, and directed the storm of human passions. They appealed, through the imagination, affections, and conscience, to the love of honour

* Alison, x. p. 78. † Plutarch.

‡ The importance of leadership applies in a less degree to all subordinate officers.

and glory, to enthusiasm, to patriotism, to revenge, to pride of race and birth; and also to the sense of religion, for strong religious convictions mightily influence the behaviour of men in battle. At Edgehill, whole regiments turned and fled without striking a blow; and Cromwell, seeing there was no cohesion in the Parliamentary army, said to Hampden, "that it was plain that men of religion were wanted to withstand those gentlemen of honour;" and this was the secret which ultimately decided the fortune of the war.*

Perhaps no man has ever exercised such extraordinary personal influence as Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver, whose laws were observed for five hundred years. Honour and glory were the watchwords of the Spartan warriors, and, like Cromwell's soldiers, they were devout in the performance of their religious rites. Moses also did his utmost to appeal to religious fervour.

The ancient Greeks and Romans made solemn and constant use of superstition, associated with religious ceremonies; they resorted to prodigies and preternatural omens to animate their troops and induce them to attempt deeds of valour. Fabius Maximus did not pay any regard to prodigies, but he did not neglect the sacred rites and auspices, not to make his soldiers superstitious, but to confirm their valour by piety, and to instil a belief in the Divine protection.

"Religion and patriotism were the principles to which, in 1812, the Russian government appealed. Every proclamation to the people, every address to the nobles, breathed the language of religious or patriotic devotion." "Let the enemy find at every step the faithful sons of Russia ready to combat all his forces, and deaf to all his seductions, despising his fraud, trampling underfoot his gold, paralyzing by the heroism of true valour all the efforts of his legions of

* Bright.

slaves. In every noble may he find a Posankoi, in every ecclesiastic a Palistyn, in every citizen a Menin! Illustrious nobles, in every age you have been the saviours of your country! Holy clergy, by your prayers you have always invoked the Divine blessing on the arms of Russia! People, worthy descendants of the brave Sclavonians, often have you broken the jaws of the lions which were open to devour you! Unite, then, with the cross in your hearts, and the sword in your hands, and no human power shall prevail against you!" *

The frenzy of religious enthusiasm has frequently been illustrated by the Turks; and the peaceful Arabs of the Soudan developed into the formidable soldiers of the Mahdi, who was a leader capable of inspiring his followers, and inflaming their religious fervour.

It is remarkable, however, that Wellington, great general as he was, never resorted to those stirring appeals and proclamations by which Napoleon electrified his troops, inspiring them at once with unlimited faith in their own prowess and boundless devotion to himself. "He was undoubtedly wanting in that sympathy with the human craving for applause, without which no general's character can be complete. The brave infantry, whose constancy in battle helped to place him high on the roll of world-famous commanders, met with but scanty praise from his lips." †. Lord Roberts writes: "Wellington gained the esteem and confidence, but not the affection, of his soldiers. By nature reserved and unsympathetic—perhaps a little selfish—he regarded his army in the light of a fighting machine. When its task was performed and peace established, he ceased to associate with the officers who had been most intimately connected with him in the field, and he did little or nothing to

* Alexander's address to the nation, July 18, 1812—Alison, x. p. 13.
† Waterloo Lectures—Chesney.

promote the welfare of his soldiers, or to make the nation understand what a debt of gratitude it owed them." A stern and simple sense of duty was the ruling principle of his life; and it is a noticeable fact, in contrasting his character with that of Napoleon, that "there is not a proclamation of the latter's to his soldiers in which glory is not mentioned, nor one in which duty is alluded to; while there is not an order of Wellington to his troops in which duty is not inculcated, nor one in which glory is mentioned." * Napoleon inspired love, Wellington only respect.† The prompting of duty alone will not serve for the inspiration of large masses of men; the powerful influence of a strong personality is needed.

The moral effect of "duty" upon British commanders has always exercised great influence. "Marlborough," says Lord Wolseley, "his great, serene mind ruffled for a moment by insult, comforts himself with this magic word; Nelson thrills his eager fleet and all future generations of Englishmen with it; Wellington, cold and impregnable, rests upon it. May England never forget all that she owes to that word, and remembering how much it has achieved for her in the past, may she thus be enabled to keep faith with her

* Alison, xii. p. 274.

† The utter want of sympathy of Wellington with his officers is nowhere more painfully shown than in his letter of January 7, 1840. "To the officers, calling themselves the remnants of the Captains and Subalterns of the Peninsula, who have sent a memorial and printed paper to Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington." See Wellington Despatches, vol. viii. p. 375. Napoleon was always praising and encouraging his officers and men; Wellington had little to offer but blame and appeals to duty, and it is the more surprising when we recall that, in those days, the promotion of the British officers had far more to do with their aristocratic connections than with the way they performed their duty; and as for the gallant rank and file, what had they to fight for? If it was not for glory, what was it? They got nothing else. Wellington's severe and sweeping address to his troops after the retreat from Madrid and Burgos, was very ill-received by his troops. See page 236.

future!"* Many a soldier keeps on the right path by calling up to his aid that simple word—*Duty.*

The great Greek, Roman, and Carthaginian generals invariably harangued their troops. "It is not the harangues at the moment of going under fire," says Napoleon, "that make the soldiers brave; the old veterans hardly listen to them, and the recruits forget them at the first sound of the cannon. If harangues and arguments are useful, it is in the course of the campaign, to counteract the effects of insinuations and false rumours, to maintain a good spirit in the camp, and to furnish matter for the chit-chat of the bivouacs."† However, a few words at the right moment have sometimes worked wonders, as when Villars, in 1703, placing himself at the head of his troops, exclaimed: "What, indeed! Will it then be necessary for me, a marshal of France, to be the first to mount the ladder, when I wish to make an attack?" Again, when Suwarroff, unable to check the retreat of his army, threw himself on the ground asking his soldiers if they intended to abandon their general. And when Napoleon, wishing to arrest the retreat at Marengo and take the offensive after the arrival of Desaix, rode to the various corps, exclaiming: "We have fallen back enough for to-day; you know that I always sleep on the field of battle!" Hoenig considers that high-flown language falls flat on German soldiers, because they are not susceptible. They are more influenced by deeds than by words.

An army, especially an invading army, should carefully avoid any wanton provocation of the opposing people, because a strong feeling of national animosity, such as the French experienced in the Peninsula, may rouse such a spirit as may easily turn the scale in the war. National resentment no doubt kept many Russian soldiers in the ranks, who would otherwise have become stragglers in consequence of the

* Marlborough, ii. p. 445. † "Maximes de Guerre," lxi.

terrible hardships they experienced during the pursuit of the French armies retreating from Moscow. Those who sow the wind may reap the whirlwind.

The Romans considered that there was nothing too great to be attempted, if those who made great attempts were duly honoured and rewarded. The spirit of their people is well illustrated by the reply which a Roman prisoner made to the Etrurian king whom he had tried to slay: "I am a Roman citizen; my name is Caius Mucius, an enemy; I wished to slay an enemy; nor have I less resolution to suffer death than I had to inflict it."

When discussing the advantages of instituting the Legion of Honour, Napoleon said to Berthier, "Do you imagine that you can make men fight by reasoning? Never; you must bribe them with glory, distinctions, rewards." It is not conceivable that there are many men in an army who care to fight, and risk death and mutilation, with no more tangible motive than the mere love of fighting and of bloodshed.

"It should be impressed upon the men by their officers," says Lord Wolseley, "that the wounded of a victorious army are always taken care of, whilst those of the beaten side fare badly. It is more essential, therefore, for the wounded than for others that their army should win, and the fewer men withdrawn from the front line to take charge of wounded the greater is their chance of success." *

Generals have sometimes found it necessary to impress upon their troops that fighting the enemy is less dangerous than misbehaving in action. Livy records of the victorious Roman dictator, Furius Camillus, that "he punished according to military discipline those who had fled from Veii in that panic, and took measures that the enemy should not be the most formidable object to the soldier." "Terror," says Napier,

* "Soldier's Pocket-book."

"has always been the resource of leaders who in great enterprises could not find discipline." The discipline of Frederick was certainly the discipline of terror. Sometimes a general is forced to exercise great severity.

Every endeavour should be made to weaken the *moral* of the enemy, and every legitimate means employed to inspire terror. "It is better to kill fifty men in an enemy's battalion if that makes the rest run away, than to kill a hundred if the rest stand firm." The *moral* of an army requires to be constantly stimulated, or reaction sets in. The faculty of doing this is the gift of few, it is not easily acquired. Many generals think they possess this faculty, but they do not; their efforts are transparently artificial. During peace, the tendency is invariably to under-rate moral effect in war, and yet "victories are determined by deeds and their consequences." * When Frederick was marching against the enemy he would sometimes forbid all firing because, said he, it is not the number of men killed that gives the victory, but the positions that you have gained. Again, he says, "In a lost battle the greatest evil is not the loss of men but the discouragement of the troops that is the result." †

On one occasion the Macedonians were perishing from want of water; a small quantity was brought to Alexander in a helmet, but he would not drink, because the young general instinctively knew the power of moral effect in war. He felt that he was called upon to set the whole army an example of self-restraint, and of patient endurance of the peculiar suffering that was afflicting the troops. Is it not in many cases true that the army is as nothing, but the general who commands it is everything? Has not history proved it over and over again?

"A good general and good officers, with good organization,

* Napier, v. p. 179. † "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxii.

good instruction, and stern discipline, make good troops, independently of the cause for which they fight. However, fanaticism, love of country and national glory can also with advantage inspire young troops." * "This seems to me more applicable to the men than to the officers, for war not being a thing natural to man, it is necessary that those who may examine into causes should be carried away by some kind of passion. In order that an army may do great things in a war in which it has no great interest, it is necessary that it should be animated by great enthusiasm and by devotion for the chief who commands it; that is sufficiently proved by the slackness with which auxiliary troops act when they are not themselves inspirited by their chief." † Take the Moscow campaign as an example; until the great reverses came, Napoleon inspirited his numerous auxiliaries with the same ardour as his French troops. The splendid manner in which the Sepoys in India fight under British officers is the result of devotion to their officers and to the *Sirkar* (Government)—the result of discipline, of organization, of *esprit de corps*, and of natural martial instincts of no mean order.

Good organization, administration, and discipline are essential to the efficiency of every armed force. "When the discipline of an infantry is slackened, then, alas! good-bye to all great successes!" ‡ Discipline is a moral force of the first importance, and it requires careful nursing in peace-time. The plain-clothes life of British officers suits us admirably, but it is apt to give rise to a familiarity between the different grades which tends to ignore the distinction of ranks, and to level downwards, and, by weakening the influence of the senior officers, to relax the bonds of that strict discipline without which no army can do great things.

* "Maximes de guerre de Napoléon," lvi.

† "Notes des Maximes." ‡ Kraft, "Infantry," p. 10.

"Rigorous rules for military discipline," says Napoleon, "are necessary to protect the army from defeats, from slaughter, and, above all, from dishonour. It must regard dishonour as more dreadful than death. A nation recovers more easily its losses in men than it recovers its honour. Military offences should be judged promptly and severely." *

Napier uses a curious expression—"the mechanical courage of discipline"—which truly expresses the power of discipline. A man may hesitate voluntarily to encounter almost certain death, but trained and controlled by discipline, he will obey mechanically because "the practice of the parade-ground becomes the instinct of the battle-field."

At Isandhlwana, when the Zulus were pressing in on the 24th regiment, Lieutenant Smith-Dorrien and the Quarter-master were opening ammunition-boxes, the latter said, "Do not touch that box, sir; it belongs to the other battalion." †

Prince Kraft states that it is a proof of a certain standard of discipline and training, if in a hot fight the men will even put their rifles to their shoulders before firing. ‡ It was Suwarroff's maxim that "the weapon itself is nothing, the man behind it is everything." "After the formation of the troops," says Marshal Saxe, "discipline is the first thing to take in hand. It is the very soul of the whole military system."

Frederick owed his victories to the perfect battle-discipline of his troops, which includes fire-control; but he says that a long war slackened their admirable discipline. He considered that the prosperity of a State is founded on the discipline of its army; and that he would never forget that the discipline of

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 23 and 24.

† "Conversation with Major Smith-Dorrien."

‡ "Letters on Infantry," pp. 74–76. In Letter xviii. on Cavalry, he states, "As the troops are taught in peace, so will they act in war—at least, at first; and no one can deny the importance of the issue of the first battles in a war."

the Romans triumphed over the might of the Gauls, the cunning of the Germans, the number of the Barbarians, and finally subjugated the whole of the known world.*

Victory depends upon inequality somewhere—it may be everywhere—and the greater the inequality the more decisive the results. When the inequality is not very marked we have terrible battles like Wagram and Borodino.

When troops are closely engaged and without any marked relative advantage in arms, numbers, courage, or position on either side, why does one side overcome, and the other waver and finally give way, when the actual losses are too small to make any material difference? Simply because "the mechanical courage of discipline" will prevail, in that it induces a cohesion which gives the men stouter hearts, and enables them to last longer, and endure a greater strain.

Natural courage will always tell, but disciplined courage will tell more, because of the moral confidence and superiority it engenders, and therefore, notwithstanding the mechanical inventions for the destruction of life, small armies of brave, disciplined, and well-commanded troops will in the future, as in the past, vanquish large armies, however brave, if they are ill-commanded, ill-disciplined, and consequently lack confidence and cohesion. "It is better to have," says Marshal Saxe, "a small number of troops well equipped and well disciplined, than to have a large number who are not so. It is not the big armies that win battles; it is the good."

The small but ever-victorious armies of Sparta illustrate the truth of what has been said. The Spartans were carefully trained from their cradles, and were the best fighting men the world has ever seen. Their peace-discipline was so perfect that they are the only troops who have not suffered from the unavoidable relaxation of discipline that occurs in the field;

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Arts. xxiii., xxvi.

on the contrary, they deliberately unloosened the tight bands of discipline when they went to war. The disciplined courage of the Spartans will be a proverb as long as the world lasts, an ideal to be admired, and perhaps approached, but probably never to be attained to by modern nations. The Spartans gave unquestioning obedience to their leaders, and this is considered by Lord Wolseley to be the greatest military virtue—far higher than courage; but the greater includes the less, and this unquestioning obedience in the stress of battle implies courage of a high order.

Enthusiasm may count for much. However, "it is but burning straw unless the true soldier spirit be present; it flares up for a short time, but goes out at once, as soon as it is chilled by the reality of war with its hardships and dangers." *

The more destructive and the more awe-striking the means of destruction in war, the more will the natural, stubborn bravery of British troops tell in their favour. At the same time it is undeniable, that the possession of a superior arm by either side will always give the army possessing it a feeling of powerful moral superiority, and oppress their opponents with a corresponding sense of alarm and depression. In the war of 1866, it is certain that the needle-gun, then used by the Prussians for the first time in a great war, had a most demoralizing effect on the Austrians, whose natural courage has never been questioned, but they were armed with the old muzzle-loader. "Our men," said their officers, "are demoralized, not by the rapidity of your fire, for we could find some means, perhaps, to counterbalance that, but because you are always ready to fire."

The chassepot was technically superior to the needle-gun in 1870–71, but, the Germans having gained the first battles, their moral ascendency more than neutralized the material

* Kraft, "Infantry," p. 273.

disadvantage of an inferior weapon. The moral effect of the first success in a campaign is prodigious, even if it is only a collision between van-guards. When Hannibal had crossed the Alps he was confronted by the elder Scipio, who imprudently engaged his cavalry with the superior cavalry of Hannibal, and was defeated. The result was that the wavering Celtic tribes, regarding the Carthaginians as the winning side, joined Hannibal, and the Gauls in the Roman army deserted to the enemy. It is an old saying, "Well begun is half done." A good start indicates good arrangements, determination, and a settled purpose.

"A high sense of honour," says Napoleon, "is the real power of a nation." * Over and over again he lays stress upon this sense of honour. With raw and undisciplined levies it is the only hope of salvation, and it is closely allied to that sense of duty to which Wellington was never weary of appealing. The English defeated the Dutch off Lowestoft on 13th June, 1665. "The Dutch van gave way; and a little later one of the junior admirals of the centre being killed, the crew seized with a panic, took the command of the ship from her officers, and carried her out of action. This movement was followed by twelve or thirteen other ships, leaving a great gap in the Dutch line. The occurrence shows, what has before been pointed out, that the discipline of the Dutch fleet and the tone of the officers were not high, despite the fine fighting qualities of the nation, and although it is probably true that there were more good seamen among the Dutch than among the English captains, the natural steadfastness and heroism of the Hollanders could not wholly supply that professional pride and sense of military honour which it is the object of sound military institutions to encourage." † British and French troops

* Pensées de Napoléon," 358.

† Mahan, "Influence of Sea Power upon History," p. 108.

have always been imbued with this sense of military honour; and the German armies conspicuously displayed it during the Franco-German war of 1870–71.

"Victory depends not so much on the losses inflicted upon the enemy as on the moral effect produced by a determination to hold what has been won, or to advance as may be ordered." At Albuera, "all seemed lost. . . . With the troops of any other nation it probably would have been so, but the English were determined not to be defeated, and it is surprising how often such a resolution in armies, as well as in individuals, works out its own accomplishment. . . . Amidst all this confusion the unconquerable courage of the British, by a kind of natural instinct, led them to the enemy, and retrieved the disasters of the day." * Napier considered that this battle, Albuera, should not have been fought by Beresford, and remarks, "None of them had fought in the late battles under Wellington. . . . Thus a burning thirst for battle was generated, and Beresford had not the art of conciliating, nor that of exacting the confidence of his troops; if he had retreated, a violent and unjust clamour would have been raised against him: and this was so strongly and unceremoniously represented to him by an officer on his own staff that he gave way. These are what may be termed the moral obstacles of war. Such men as Lord Wellington or Sir John Moore can stride over them; to second-rate minds they are insuperable. Practice and study may make a good general as to the handling of troops and the designing a campaign, but the ascendency of spirit which leads the wise while it controls the insolence of folly, is a rare gift of nature." †

It is not often we find a general over-estimating moral effect; but Napoleon appears to have done this at Borodino, and at Moscow. He was blamed at the time, and afterwards, for not

* Alison, ix. p. 143. † Napier, iii. p. 176.

engaging his last reserve at Borodino to complete the victory. It would be absurd to imagine that he was not fully alive to the military situation. His objective was Moscow, and he saw clearly that he could occupy that city in a few days, and before the Russians could fight another battle. He considered that moral effect would ensure peace, provided his army was sufficiently formidable, but it had already dwindled down to less than one-half. Therefore for moral considerations he did not allow the Guard to go into action. It was not a case of pursuit, because the Russians still held on to the greater part of the battle-field, and consequently Napoleon's last reserve would have suffered heavy losses. "I will not," he said, "throw away my best protection at this immense distance from my nearest supports." Then, again, there was to be considered the moral effect of the bulletin informing France and Europe that a victory had been won without the necessity of the Guard or the Emperor going under fire. He also over-estimated the moral effect of the occupation of Moscow; and yet it was only three years previously that the moral effect of the occupation of Vienna had not been decisive, and that the Wagram campaign had followed the capture of the Austrian capital.

Some men are bewildered by danger, whereas others, like William III. and Masséna, become as it were inspired by the stimulus derived from the responsibility of directing in a critical situation. Napoleon in conversation at St. Helena said, "Masséna was a very superior man, who, by a very peculiar privilege, only possessed the so-much-to-be-desired equilibrium when he was under fire; it appeared in him in the midst of danger." *

It must be remembered that in battle, generals not only stake their lives but their reputations: if they win, they secure

* Las Cases, i. p. 248.

honour, glory, love, and respect; if they lose, they may be overwhelmed with misfortune and contempt. The very magnitude of the stakes produces frequently a nervous hesitation. Consider Burnside at Fredericksburg; he hesitated, and he was lost. It is related that "when he had gained the farther bank and stood face to face with his great opponent calmly awaiting him upon the hills, he appears to have become mentally paralyzed. Perhaps then for the first time he became conscious that he had committed an irreparable blunder; that he was playing his adversary's game, and had placed his army in that very situation where Lee most wished to find it.

"In prompt and vigorous action lay his only hope of success, whether to prevent, as he still hoped, the Confederate army from concentrating, or whether to hew himself free from the toils that bound him. But what do we find? Instead of rapid movement, delay and irresolution; instead of the impetuous advance of overwhelming masses, a series of feeble and ill-supported attacks. The last was his chief and crowning error. To a daring general much may be forgiven; but from him who has grappled with his enemy and failed to put forth all his strength, even pity stands aloof. Turn to the story of Orthes, read how at the crisis of the fight every man save one Portuguese battalion was thrust into the battle, and understand with what stern energy victory is compelled." *

Apart from the fear of death, which only enhances the effect, it is not surprising that all soldiers, of whatever grade, should be morally impressed by so serious and so sublime a spectacle as a great battle in which human lives are staked on a huge scale. A moderate amount of danger is perhaps exhilarating to most men, but there is no one who is entirely unmoved by witnessing the effects of a very heavy fire, though he may so control himself as to appear to be perfectly indifferent to

* Henderson's "Fredericksburg," p. 136.

what is passing around him. "No one is indifferent to danger to life. But the strength of our nerves carries us through." * Yet personal bravery in individuals is no guarantee against a panic † in masses.

The panic at Badajos is a good example. "Some of the soldiers immediately after, perceiving a lighted match on the ground, cried out, 'A mine!' At that word, such is the power of imagination, those troops who had not been stopped by the strong barrier, the deep ditch, the high walls, and the deadly fire of the enemy, staggered back appalled by a chimera of their own raising; and in this disorder a French reserve under General Veillande drove on them with a firm and rapid charge, pitching some men over the walls, killing others outright, and cleansing the ramparts even to the San Vincente." ‡

Again, "At the battle of Fridelingen, the French infantry, after having driven in that of the Imperialists, with an incomparable valour, after having broken it several times, and chased it through a wood to a plain beyond, some one took it into his head to say that they were cut off—there appeared in sight two squadrons, French perhaps—all this victorious infantry ran away in frightful disorder, without any one attacking it or following it, recrossed the wood, and only pulled up when it had got beyond the field of battle. Marshal Villars and his generals made vain efforts to lead it back. They were the same men and the same troops that had just defeated the Imperial infantry, yet a panic-terror had so possessed their senses, that they lost their heads to such a degree that they could not be rallied. He who would seek for similar examples,

* Kraft, "Infantry," p. 107.

† Panic, or belonging to Pan. This god was supposed to appear suddenly and inspire a panic fear. According to Herodotus, Pan in this way assisted the Athenians at Marathon by striking terror into the Persians.

‡ Napier, iv. p. 121.

will find many in the records of all nations. This proves sufficiently the diversity of the human heart, and the value one must attach to it." *

And again, "At Rome, an alarm, which happened in the night, suddenly roused the people from their sleep in such a fright that the capitol and citadel, the walls and gates were all filled with men in arms. But after they had called all to their posts, and run together in bodies in every quarter, when day approached, neither the author nor the cause of the alarm could be discovered." †

Yet another example: The night following the hard-fought battle of Wagram witnessed a false alarm that might have produced the most serious consequences. "The alarm spread like wildfire from rank to rank: the guard even was shaken: the victors for a moment doubted of the fate of the day. The ranks presented the appearance of a general rout; and yet the whole was occasioned by a single squadron of the Archduke John's cavalry." ‡

"The appreciation and the bestowal of praise and blame both rest on sympathy; and this emotion, as we have seen, is one of the most important elements of the social instinct. . . . As all men desire their own happiness, praise or blame is bestowed on actions and motives, according as they lead to this end; and as happiness is an essential part of the general good, the greatest-happiness principle indirectly serves as a nearly safe standard of right and wrong." §

Marshal Saxe says: "The soldiers communicate with one another and speak with one another, the officers also; they converse in the army and in the garrisons about the events of

* Marshal Saxe, "Mes Rêveries." The panic of the Russians after Friedland in 1807 is another example.

† Livy. The panic of the Greeks in 1897 is another example.

‡ Alison, viii. p. 170. § Darwin, "Descent of Man," p. 611.

the campaign; they desire to imitate fine actions, because people praise them; and these trifles spread a spirit of emulation among the troops, that gains possession of the officer and the soldier, and in time renders the troops invincible."

"Stonewall Jackson's troops were unconquerable," says Lord Wolseley, "because they had unbounded confidence in their God-fearing leader, who in his turn trusted them most fully, and believed they could accomplish anything." *

"Traditions carry with them a superhuman force, superior to logic, and from which the astonishing effects are out of all proportion to all causes apparent or known." † And referring to the French Cuirassiers: "They breathe confidence and inspire terror. They believe themselves invincible, and, for that very reason, they are so."

"Improvements in armament cannot change human nature, and as long as the latter continues to be the principal factor in battle, so long will the cavalry be able to repeat the profession of faith which the old Field-Marshal Wrangel uttered at the close of the wars of the Empire: 'No, the hope of performing great deeds will not vanish so long as the battle-fields present ground which is undulating, woody, and lends itself to surprises; so long as clouds of smoke envelope the fight, the din of battle and danger deprive comparatively weak natures of the power of deciding for themselves, and our adversaries continue to be men on whom the approach of a compact charge will not have merely the same effect as the sight of a target.'" †

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1888: "Military Genius."
† Revue des Deux Mondes, 1889.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

THE intimate connection between Strategy and Tactics is explained in the words of Hamley: "All operations must ultimately rely for success upon power of fighting; for it is of no avail to conduct an army into situations which it cannot maintain in battle." Thus all the ability displayed by Marmont in the operations preceding the battle of Salamanca was nullified by his eventually conducting his army into a situation in which it could not maintain itself in the battle. Again, it was of no avail that Wrede at Hanau in 1813, with less than 45,000 men, attempted to bar the way against 80,000 Frenchmen headed by the Old and Young Guard.

The object, then, of all strategical movements is to secure advantageous positions in the theatre of war. These movements may lead to the accepting, forcing, or refusing a battle; or may merely induce counter-movements on the part of the adversary, who is usually compelled to conform; as, for example, when retrograde movements are necessary for the safety of the communications, or for purposes of combination. Wellington's retreat after his victory at Talavera, and again after his success at Busaco, are examples of such retrograde movements; and further instances are to be found in his withdrawal from the line of the Douro before the battle of Salamanca, and his retirement to Waterloo after the combat of the 16th of June at Quatre Bras.

Tactics embrace the formations of the troops, their dispositions, and their movements on the field of battle, or in

its immediate vicinity. Tactics are considered good, or bad, according to the skill, or otherwise, with which the troops are handled before, during, and after collision.

From a study of Strategy an officer learns to correctly appreciate the configuration of the theatre of war, the decisive points, the value of certain positions within it, and the relative importance to be attached to the military operations undertaken by each side, greatly influenced as they are by the mobility and marching capacity of the troops. The tactical handling of troops cannot be learnt without practice, but strategy depends more on theory and art than on practice.

The defeat of the enemy in battle should be the immediate object in view; but, independently of the gain due to the actual fighting, further and far-reaching results may follow, if the victor's line of advance to strike happens to endanger the communications of his opponent either with his base, or with other parts of his army. Compare, for example, the effect of the stroke of the French on the Prussians at Ligny with that of the return-thrust delivered by the Prussians on the French at Waterloo. Again, Napoleon's victory at Marengo was irreparable ruin to the Austrians because it severed their communications. It is thus apparent, that the direction of the stroke—a matter for strategical arrangement—may be of far more importance than the actual loss inflicted upon the field of battle. Sedan, where a large army had to surrender, is a good instance. Vittoria is another example.

It cannot be too strongly urged that the defeat of the enemy's army should be the object of all strategical movements. Napoleon stated that he never had a plan of operations. Von Moltke followed this good advice, and laid down that we can never sketch out a plan of operations with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's principal army.

Therefore, when acting on the offensive, the only object in view is "to seek out the enemy's principal army, and to attack it wherever it is to be found." It is therefore pure romance to say that Von Moltke foretold the catastrophe at Sedan. He fixed his mind on one geographical point only, and that was where he expected to find the enemy's principal army. After due reflection we can decide where the enemy can concentrate with the best advantage to himself, and we can make our strategical arrangements accordingly. After discovering the enemy, turning movements may be considered, and the plan of operations developed a stage further.*

The plan of Napoleon III. in 1870 was based solely on political considerations and on the occupation of geographical positions. No general ever more thoroughly ignored the first principle of offensive strategy, which is to seek out the enemy's army and endeavour to defeat it. Without the prestige and power of victory, it is not surprising that the Southern German States did not see the force of the Emperor's political arguments. As a matter of fact France was not in the commanding position she imagined. She was not in any way prepared, and should have avoided war; but if forced upon her, her only chance was the defensive on the line of the Moselle and the Meurthe. There is nothing more feeble in the history of a great nation than the utter breakdown of the French attempt to invade Germany. The plan of Napoleon III. was based on vain and idle fancies, and no excuse can be urged, because Stoffel had sent full and accurate information from Berlin. His reports were not only not read, but actually not unsealed!† Again, the Emperor violated a principle of strategy when he deployed his corps on the frontier not within supporting distance of one another. Then

* See Kraft's "Lettres sur la Strategie," No. 15.

† Ibid., No. 16.

followed the attacks on the isolated corps of Frossard and McMahon at Spicheren and at Woerth. The third great fault was in concentrating the corps before they were ready for war; that is to say, before their mobilization was complete. It is very difficult to avoid the consequences of a false step; even the great Napoleon made false moves, but he was generally able to rectify his mistakes before the consequences were serious, due sometimes to the rapidity with which he came to a decision, but sometimes to the intervention of Fortune.

When the German corps were deployed to the west of Metz, their objective was the enemy's army, then supposed to be at Châlons; Von Moltke's plan could not see further into the future. It was the French government, not Von Moltke, that made the circumstances by which the catastrophe at Sedan became possible. McMahon very properly wished to fall back on Paris.

A decisive advantage may often be obtained by Strategy alone, and without any actual fighting. A perfect example is Napoleon's splendid success at Ulm, where Mack surrendered with thirty thousand men without fighting a battle. Frequently the effect of a strategical movement is felt long before there is any possibility of a collision, and the enemy is obliged to promptly evacuate his positions without fighting. The strategical movement of Marmont obliged Wellington to retire from the line of the Douro on Salamanca. It is sometimes possible to threaten the enemy's communications without making the situation reciprocal. This was the case in 1808, when Napoleon marched against Sir John Moore. And in a less degree at Marengo, where, if Napoleon had been defeated, he had still a line of retreat open.

Further, a general may have such confidence in the fighting power of his army, that he may be justified in disregarding his own communications while striking at those of his

adversary. This was the case at Mars-la-Tour; and notably so at Gravelotte, where each side faced its own base, and the Germans staked everything upon a victory. The situation was of their own seeking, and such was their confidence, that they not only hazarded their own communications, but deliberately manœuvred so that a vast fortress and a field army stood between them and their base. Such enterprises are not to be lightly recommended, or undertaken; but the end in this instance justified the means; and the victory of Gravelotte, with the consequent locking-up of Bazaine's army in Metz, showed that the Germans had justly appreciated the situation and their own fighting capacity. Although the end frequently justifies the means, we should not allow success to stifle adverse criticism, otherwise all the false moves of a successful operation could be justified or explained away. Take Frederick at Prague—he won a great victory, but he placed his troops in the most critical situation with a hostile army in their rear. Possibly he counted upon the want of enterprise of his opponent.

In every attack or defence the strategical situation demands attention as well as the tactical aspect. A general should, if possible, manœuvre so as to gain some relative advantage of position—as Marmont at Salamanca—and similarly be on his guard, that the enemy does not so out-manœuvre him that he is liable to greater disaster than an ordinary defeat would entail. Had Wellington lost the battle of Salamanca he was irretrievably ruined, whereas Marmont, who lost the battle, suffered no greater disaster than an ordinary defeat.

Sometimes it may be desirable—nay, even necessary—to sacrifice a strategical advantage for political considerations, or in order to make more certain of an immediate tactical success; but under these circumstances, a general cannot usually expect very brilliant or decisive results. In her wars

with France, Austria, on different occasions, took up a forward position on the Rhine, in order to cover her allies, and thus military considerations had to yield to political. Strategy is inseparable from politics. In 1859, the Austrians considered that, although war was apparently inevitable, for political reasons they should defer their military preparations in Italy so long as there was a possibility of peace. In this way they lost three months and an opportunity of striking with superior force, and the French were victorious. In 1870, the French were irritated, lost patience and calmness, and precipitated the declaration of war before their preparations were complete for the strategical deployment on the frontier. On the contrary, every effort of diplomacy should have been made to gain time for the strategical developments. Again, the state of public opinion decided Napoleon III. to attempt an impossible offensive, delayed the strategical retreat, and finally caused the ruin of the Army of the Rhine.

One of the most unfortunate examples of political considerations leading to national disaster was the march of McMahon to the relief of Metz. Again, on the 16th of February, 1814, Napoleon heard of the alarm of the Parisians, and marched to cover Paris instead of attacking Schwartzenberg in flank; thus sacrificing the military situation for political considerations. On the other hand, under certain circumstances, an able commander should not hesitate to forego tactical advantages, within certain limits, in favour of strategical considerations. Lee did this at Fredericksburg when he allowed Burnside unopposed to cross the Rappahannock to make him fight with the river close in his rear; and when Burnside was repulsed, he only escaped ruinous disaster because Fortune was undeservedly kind to him, and induced Lee, for reasons which may be explained, but cannot be excused, to refrain from counterstroke or pursuit.

In 1800, the French under Moreau faced the Austrians under Kray on the Upper Rhine. The French possessed the bridges and Switzerland. Napoleon wished Moreau to turn the Austrian left by crossing at Schaffhausen, where there was no bridge, and by anticipating Kray at Ulm, to cut him from his base. But Moreau's cautious nature was unequal to such bold strategy; he preferred the tactical advantage of crossing where he would be unopposed, and for the sake of the certainty of this tactical advantage, he rejected the most brilliant strategy which offered every reasonable chance of the most decisive results, and why? Because there was an element of risk.

Each case must be judged separately according to its merits; *there are no rigid rules in war;* but perhaps Marshal Saxe went a little too far when he wrote, "Every science has principles and rules; war has none." A general may be justified in doing to-day what he must not do to-morrow, or to-morrow what he may not do to-day. A shower of rain, a fog, a hard frost, a thaw, reinforcements for one side or the other, an unexpected success or disaster, or an order disobeyed or misunderstood, may suddenly necessitate a complete change of plans.

"Yet who shall say with certainty what termination any war will ever have? Who shall prophesy of an art always varying, and of such intricacy that its secrets seem beyond the reach of human intellect? What vast preparations, what astonishing combinations were involved in the plan, what vigour and ability displayed in the execution, of Napoleon's march to Moscow! Yet when the winter came, only four days sooner than he expected, the giant's scheme became a theme for children's laughter."*

Napoleon has told us that the whole art of war—the secret

* Napier, v. p. 2.

of success—consists in being strongest at the decisive point. A sound knowledge of the principles of Strategy guides us in the selection of the decisive point in the theatre of war on which to direct our chief efforts, and a thorough acquaintance with Tactics enables us, arrived at that point, to appreciate the relative importance of the topographical features of the field, and the dispositions of the enemy to contest their possession with us. Finally, the distribution of the troops to the best advantage is the main object of all tactics.

"As Blucher was pushing the attack (on the French right flank at Waterloo), advices reached him from Thielemann hard pressed by Grouchy's superior force at Wavre; but with glorious hardihood, the brave old man, willing rather to expose his own rear than to slacken his attack at the decisive point (Plancenoit), sent word to his lieutenant to hold his own as best he could, since no reinforcement could at present be spared him." *

The manner of directing movements so as to be the strongest at the decisive point is a matter of detail; it may be desirable to advance or retire so as to concentrate; or the columns may converge on the march. In 1796 it was bad strategy for Moreau and Jourdan to operate against the Archduke Charles's outer flanks; it was good strategy for him to retire and concentrate. When he had done so, he forced the French back across the Rhine, and by divergent lines. The Archduke saved Germany by his concentric retreat. Divergent retreats can rarely be justified, because a beaten army is already so weak, it is folly to still further weaken it by dividing. After the defeat at Eckmuhl in 1809, the wings of the Austrian army were forced to retire by divergent lines, but the immediate object of the Archduke Charles was to reform a junction as soon as possible, and be stronger at some position in rear.

* Waterloo Lectures, Chesney.

These operations led to the terrible fighting at Aspern, Essling, and Wagram.

From what has been said about being the strongest at the decisive point, it follows that it is bad strategy to expose portions of an army to attack before they have established communication. Thus good strategy should ensure a concentration, or at least a thorough communication between the separated columns at some point outside the sphere of the enemy's enterprise. The junction of Frederick with Schwerin in the vicinity of Prague was bad strategy, because the Duke of Lorraine might have attacked him before the junction. Wellington's stand at Waterloo was risky, because it was only through the favour of Fortune that Blucher was in time to co-operate.

To sum up, a relative advantage of position is gained by threatening the enemy's communications, without exposing one's own, as was gained by Napoleon at Marengo, at Jena, and when he moved against Sir John Moore, and by Marmont at Salamanca. Then there is the case of both armies directly covering their communications, but the line of retreat of one of them leading through a defile upon which it may be forced back, and its communications choked; as happened to the Romans at the Trebbia, and to the French at the Beresina and at Leipsic. Again, advantage is gained by breaking through the strategical front, and then attacking in turn, with superior force, the separated wings. Napoleon did this in the campaign of 1796, and again in the Eckmuhl campaign of 1809. Strategical advantage is also gained by the use of a containing force to check the enemy or hold him fast, while turning movements or superior concentrations are being made in other directions. An excellent example is Davoust containing the Austrian right wing while Napoleon defeated the left wing at Abensberg, during the Eckmuhl campaign. There

are many examples of a containing force in the campaign of 1814 in the valleys of the Marne and Seine. Finally, strategical advantage is gained by combined attacks from converging lines of operation. Waterloo and Königgrätz are good instances; also the closing in upon the "Grande Armée" in its retreat from Moscow.

Strategy after all is largely a matter of common sense, but, for all that, requires study and reflection, and a general who can act with decision. In the Jena campaign, there were Prussian generals well versed in the art of war, but they had so many councils of war and hesitated so long between this opinion and that opinion, that no decisive action was possible; and in the end they violated every principle of strategy. There is no campaign which teaches us so effectively what not to do. Napoleon himself, from insufficient information, committed faults and gave opportunities to the enemy, but as they did not profit by them, we hear very little of his mistakes; nevertheless the campaign illustrates the truth of the saying that the victory is with him who commits the fewest faults.

The campaign of 1814 is an example of considerable strategical complexity, and is treated by General Hamley in his "Operations of War" as "a case of two or more converging rivers whose general course is parallel to the path by which an army advances towards its object." In this campaign Napoleon repeatedly, and with inferior forces at his disposal, succeeded in being the strongest at the decisive points, and secured great results by the wise strategical direction of his operations.

It is simple enough, with all the facts before us, to see why an army was moved, or should have been moved, from "A" to "B;" but it is not so easy to realize the difficulties of the movement, and the numerous and important details of execution;

these can be learnt only from original records, from histories like Napier, from biographies, and from the graphic narratives or memoirs of those who were actors in the campaigns.

With a good map before us, and a full knowledge of facts, we can always be wise after the event. It can be asserted that the army should undoubtedly have been at "C" instead of at "B;" but, was it possible? Were the men and horses in a condition to march? In what condition were the roads? Were supplies and ammunition available, and the transport for them sufficient? What was the weather like? Was there any misleading information? What was the extent of the general's information at the time? Was any important order disobeyed * or misunderstood, or did it miscarry? Was the general hampered by superior orders, or by political considerations? Or did any subordinate, influenced by unworthy jealousy, fail him at a critical moment? †

Allied armies seldom fight well together; there are always discords, dissensions, and jealousies. Take the Crimea as an example. The chivalrous and loyal support that Eugène always gave to Marlborough is a brilliant exception. The counsels and interests of allies are so divergent that concerted action and loyal co-operation are almost impossible. We have a good example of this when France and Spain, towards the end of the eighteenth century, were in alliance, and had opportunities of bringing decisive disaster upon England, but Spain took a narrow view of the situation, was selfish and

* It has always been considered that the disobedience of orders by the Archduke John was fatal to the Austrians in 1809 at Aspern, and at Wagram. Here also are examples of the "Fortune of War," favourable to Napoleon.

† History teems with examples. Take as instances the royalist generals in our great civil war; Marshals Tallard and Marsin at Blenheim; Bernadotte at Auerstädt and on other occasions; and the French marshals in the Peninsula.

almost disloyal, insisting upon her own immediate advantage whether at Gibraltar or in the West Indies, and consequently the superior power of the allied fleets was dissipated and misapplied.

All these minor but important considerations are intimately interwoven with the great principles of Strategy and Tactics, which in their turn are closely related to each other; and he is the greatest general who, inspired by genius, and guided by prudence and calculation, is readiest in resource, and quickest to appreciate at its just worth every incident affecting the operations of either side, and to turn them all to his own advantage.

THE OFFENSIVE AND THE DEFENSIVE COMPARED.

In battle, the defensive does not merely ward off, but strikes with exactly the same weapons as the offensive; the great difference between them is that the attacking side takes the initiative, brings on the fighting at its own time, and commences with this advantage over the defending side.

It is of primary importance in war to seize and retain the initiative. A moral superiority is at once asserted, which is always valuable; and the immense advantage is gained that orders can be issued with a distinct object in view; while, on the other hand, if acting on the defensive we must wait to see the turn events may take; and, in the mean time, we must remain sorely perturbed by anxious expectation as to where the stroke will fall; and the greater the extent of the defender's position, the greater the uncertainty as to the point of attack and the greater the chance that sufficient troops will not be at hand to repel it, as happened at Blenheim, at Leuthen, and at Gravelotte. When the nerves are in high tension it is a relief to act—to do something—and it requires an uncommonly strong mind to await calmly and firmly the development of great events.

This uncertainty as to the real object and importance of a movement produces what is often a fatal hesitation, and may be a sufficient reason for deciding on an offensive in preference to a defensive *rôle*. In the campaign of 1859 the

Austrian reconnaissance to the south bank of the Po that led to the action of Montebello, caused Napoleon III. to suspend his operations for seven days. The miserable reconnaissance of the French to Saarbrücken disconcerted all Von Moltke's arrangements, because the troops were detrained further back, thus causing a delay of some days in the concentration at the front.*

Marshal Saxe has said, "He who halts when the enemy is marching against him is lost." To take the lead, to act with a well-formulated idea, and to compel the adversary to conform, is very different to waiting and watching, and merely trying to ascertain and counteract the moves of an opponent who is skilfully endeavouring to mislead us at every step. To surprise the enemy is to take a long step towards victory, and it is only by offensive action that this becomes possible.

Perhaps almost as high qualifications are required to make an able defence on a large scale as to direct an attack with *adequate* means. It undoubtedly requires much nerve, judgment, and moral courage to plan a grand assault on a strong position, and to issue the final and detailed instructions for carrying it out. Napoleon in conversation at St. Helena said, "That people had an idea but little just of the strength of mind necessary to fight, with a full consideration of all the consequences, one of those great battles on which depend the fate of an army, of a country, and the possession of a throne. Also, he remarked, that one rarely found generals eager to give battle; they took up well enough their position, settled themselves, considered their combinations; but *then* commenced their vacillations; and there is nothing more difficult, and yet more important, than to know how to make up one's mind." † How strikingly was this truth illustrated

* Kraft, "Lettres sur la Stratégie," Nos. 13, 15.

† Las Cases, i. p. 218.

by Burnside's attitude of hesitation and vacillation at Fredericksburg! *

Cæsar and Napoleon were great believers in the offensive. At Dyrrhachium, Cæsar, with an inferior force, took the offensive against Pompey, and was defeated; yet soon afterwards at Pharsalia, he again took the offensive, and gained the victory. He blamed Pompey for standing on the defensive, and said that "Pompey was not aware what weight the swift and fierce advance to the first charge gives to every blow, nor how the courage of each soldier is inflamed by the rapid motion of the whole." †

Whether it is proper to act on the offensive or on the defensive must be decided by the circumstances connected, at the time, with each particular case. If in doubt, it would generally be wise to choose the offensive; but it frequently happens that there is no choice, because circumstances decide the matter, and force the defensive on one side or the other in each particular encounter.

When the Spartans appeared before Athens, B.C. 428, with a great army, it appeared to Pericles too hazardous to accept battle. He adopted what was two centuries later called the Fabian system of war, but a defensive policy is always unpopular. However, Pericles "remained firm, notwithstanding the importunity of his friends, and the threats and accusations of his enemies; notwithstanding the many scoffs and songs sung to vilify his character as a general, and to represent him as one who, in the most dastardly manner, betrayed his country to the enemy. He observed, 'That trees, when lopped, will soon grow again; but when men are cut off, the loss is not easily repaired.'" Unfortunately for Pericles men *were* cut off, because he herded so many together that the plague broke out.

* *Vide* pp. 127 and 176. † Plutarch.

If one army is very decidedly inferior in fighting capacity to the enemy, it should imitate the Fabian policy and avoid a general action, but engage in as many petty actions as occasions may offer advantages. The name of the great Roman general, Fabius Maximus, is associated with this method of fighting, which he adopted after the overthrow of the Roman armies by Hannibal, but the Romans considered that he continued this cautious defensive too long, as the moral effect was becoming injurious, consequently he was superseded; but the appalling catastrophe of Cannæ was the result. Marshal Saxe was much inclined to the Fabian system of war. The Russians adopted the same system in 1812, and would have done well to have continued it till the hardships of winter had struck heavily upon the "Grande Armée," but here again the moral effect became unbearable to the Russian nation, hence the battle of Borodino. The Fabian method of war is suitable to savage nations who should avoid a battle, trusting to exposure, climate, and disease to wear down the invaders, harassed as they must be by the difficulties of transport and supply, and by the immense cost of the operations. But, on the contrary, a general who knows his superiority must lose no opportunity of forcing his opponent to battle, or he may find his army dwindle down till it is actually inferior to the enemy. Hannibal did all he could to force Fabius to fight a battle. William the Conqueror, by feigning a retreat, induced King Harold to come out and fight.

An army may act strategically on the offensive, but tactically on the defensive, and *vice versâ*. The allies invading France in 1814 acted strategically on the offensive, but mostly fought defensive battles. Napoleon's strategy was defensive, but his tactics were essentially offensive. The German armies in 1870–71 covering the siege of Paris were, for that particular

operation, acting strategically on the defensive, but on the battle-field they almost invariably marched against the enemy and took the offensive; the actual investing armies might be said to have been strategically on the offensive, and to all intents and purposes tactically on the defensive. Taken as a whole, the German strategy in 1870–71 was offensive; and when an army acts strategically on the offensive, it rarely fights defensive battles, as did the Allies in 1814, and the British army in the Peninsula. It is instructive to consider the military situation at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstädt, and at Inkerman.

The offensive may be chosen from political, geographical, or strategical considerations, or from a supposed moral or numerical superiority, or from confidence in a superior organization and administration, or from being better prepared, or from a combination of these circumstances; but in every case financial considerations will play an important part, because it is difficult to move a modern army without the command of ready money. It would be wrong, however, to imagine that long and sanguinary wars are impossible without the command of money. At the commencement of our Civil War, and of the Thirty Years' War, it was supposed that the impoverished condition of the people, and the want of money, must bring the operations to a close. This will never be the case when there is no marked inequality between the contending parties. When great wars have been short—for example, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the Franco-German War of 1870–71, and the war between China and Japan—the inequality has been very marked.

On the field of battle, an army may take the offensive without numerical or moral superiority; but the odds must be against success, unless skilful manœuvres, stratagems, or

surprises are resorted to. However, troops have over and over again been victorious in attack when the chances were greatly against them. Superior mobility has frequently turned the scale of victory in favour of what was apparently the inferior force. We are accustomed to victory in savage warfare where the numerical superiority was heavy against us, but every other factor, arms, equipment, organization, discipline, leadership, etc., all have been in our favour. "It is a fact that we may search modern history in vain for a battle in which an army has beaten another double its own strength,* an occurrence by no means uncommon in former times. Buonaparte, the greatest general of modern times, in all his great victorious battles—with one exception, that of Dresden, 1813—had managed to assemble an army superior in numbers, or at least very little inferior, to that of his opponent; and when it was impossible for him to do this, as at Leipsic, Brienne, Laon, and Waterloo, he was beaten." †

Sometimes "a skilful offensive is the best defence."‡ The maxim of "covering physical weakness by moral audacity" § is attributed to Napoleon; and it is an old saying that "Fortune favours the brave;" and again, "The less the fear, the less the danger." All engaged in desperate enterprises should believe in such maxims. It is not true, however, that in battle the less the fear, the less the danger for *the individual*, but there is undoubtedly less danger for *the many*.

If an adversary exposes himself to be attacked in detail, or to be rolled up by a flank attack, or to be surprised, an inferior army should undoubtedly attack. In such a situation it should be a case of striking hard and quickly. The moral effect of the offensive is prodigious. It implies

* Clausewitz overlooks Rossbach and Auerstädt. See p. 172.

† Clausewitz, ii. p. 4.

‡ Particularly applies to Asiatic warfare.

§ Napier, vi. p. 80.

superiority and confidence, and this feeling, spreading from the general to the men, will render their onset doubly formidable. A few successful assaults, and the army becomes invincible. Wellington, elated by the success of the vigorous offensive operations of 1813, stated that he could do anything and go anywhere with such troops.

A position often appears to be impregnable, which on closer examination proves to be only a formidable position against which the directions of attack are greatly restricted.

In the case of a salient or of a re-entering base, the strategical advantages on the side of the offensive may be very decisive; but when the invaders' line of operation lies between, and nearly parallel to, two or more converging rivers, as was the case in 1814, the offensive labours under very great disadvantages, and in these days of networks of railways, an invader in such a situation, with a long line of operations, might be dangerously exposed to concentrations against his communications.

Notwithstanding the supposed advantages that the defenders may have on their side, their plans, though influenced greatly by the ground, are based more or less on conjecture regarding the part that will be played by the other side. Conjecture is often found to be wrong. Towards the end of the campaign of 1814, Napoleon supposed that his operations in the rear of Schwartzenberg were so threatening that this general would be compelled to retrograde. But the conjecture was wrong; the army of Bohemia, disregarding the menace in rear, marched straight on Paris, and ended the war.

An army may act on the defensive from political, geographical, or strategical considerations, or in consequence of moral or numerical inferiority, or from defective organization and administration, or from want of preparation, or

from a combination of circumstances, or it may be compelled so to act by losing the initiative. But a force acting on the defensive does not necessarily give up entire control over the initiative, because it may hold a position so strategically offensive, as that of Napoleon at Marengo, that the enemy may be obliged to attack it, or suffer serious disadvantage; and, moreover, the attitude of the defenders will generally restrict very much the possible directions of attack. Thus the defensive is justified when the position is naturally strong, and the enemy is forced to attack it in front, and it offers facilities for a counter-attack. On the defensive, also, the power to raise money may control the military situation. Wellington was at times greatly hampered by want of ready money in the Peninsula. The coalitions against Napoleon must have collapsed but for the British subsidies. In 1741, the bad quality of the food supplied to his troops caused so much sickness that Frederick was compelled to fall back upon the defensive, much against his will.*

It has been stated, and with truth, that the offensive has the advantage of the moral effect which is produced by the sense of superiority which it implies. But when the defenders are well posted in a deliberately chosen position, and when the assailants are well under fire throughout their advance, and when, in consequence, the wavering is rather amongst the attackers than the attacked; then the situation is reversed; and at this phase of the operations the moral effect may rather favour the defenders, who, being under cover, enjoy a sense of security impossible to those who are marching through a hailstorm of bullets. In 1812, the French troops defending Badajos enjoyed this sense of security: "Gathering in dark groups and leaning on their

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiii.

muskets, they (the British soldiers) looked up with sullen desperation at the Trinidad, while the enemy, stepping out on the ramparts, and aiming their shots by the light of the fire-balls which they threw over, asked, as their victims fell, '*why they did not come into Badajos.*'" *

To stand on the defensive does not, therefore, by any means, necessarily imply inferiority, or want of confidence. "Probably no general or army ever awaited the attack of a more numerous enemy with greater confidence than did Lee and the Confederates at Fredericksburg." † And many similar examples might be quoted.

If the enemy can be induced, or compelled, to take the offensive against a well-prepared position, the counter-stroke of the defenders should be very effective. Such was Hannibal's counter-stroke at the Trebbia, and such should have been Lee's at Fredericksburg. When the troops are raw and the leaders inexperienced, as happened at the outbreak of the American Civil War, it is probably advantageous to act on the defensive as the Confederates did at Bull Run.

The defenders must certainly be impressed by the sight of the advancing enemy; by the appalling spectacle of the rush of masses of men, furious for revenge, and flushed by the prospect of victory; but, for all that, many causes will combine to render them calm and confident. "So determined was the Federals' advance, that Colonel Miller, commanding the Confederate brigade confronting them—for General Cobb had already fallen—ordered his men to hold their fire for a space. And now occurred a strange and pathetic incident. Though high was the courage of that thin line which charged so boldly across the shot-swept plain, opposed to it were men as fearless and as staunch. Behind that rude stone breastwork were those who were 'bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh;' the

* Napier, iv. p. 118. † Henderson, p. 67.

soldiers of Cobb's brigade were Irish like themselves. On the morning of the battle, General Meagher had bade his men deck their caps with sprigs of evergreen, 'to remind them,' he said, 'of the land of their birth.' The symbol was recognized by their countrymen, and 'Oh, God, what a pity! Here come Meagher's fellows,' was the cry in the Confederate ranks." *

Troops acting on the defensive are far more easily supplied with ammunition; they are under a stricter supervision and an easier control; they undergo no physical exertion; their position compensates for some numerical or moral inferiority; their losses are far less than those of the assailants, so long as they stand firm, and during the actual assault they are probably not under fire at all; their fire is deadly, for the ranges are known, and their aim is not disturbed by movement; moreover, they act on known ground, on prepared communications, and on interior lines. Again, except in the case of a siege, the defenders are usually better provided for, and it was "the maxim of the great generals of antiquity, that even with the bravest troops, it is of the last importance to commence a battle with the strength of the men recently recruited by food." † Hannibal observed this maxim at the Trebbia, and so did the Archduke Charles at Aspern, and Frederick stated that the stomach is the foundation of all military operations. Finally, "Artillery can produce no effect while it is on the move, and when it has ceased to move it loses the time necessary to find the new range. It is one weak point of the attack that its artillery must manœuvre; that is to say, that it must advance from one position to another. The defence must take advantage of this weak point, and must pay the greatest regard to the source of its own strength, namely,

* Henderson's "Fredericksburg," p. 80.

† Alison, viii. p. 90.

the absence of any necessity to move its artillery." * However, there is less necessity for moving attacking guns now than formerly, but much greater danger in doing so.

Thus, the defenders have certain advantages on their side; and if prepared, in due course, to deal a counter-stroke, they may await the attack without undue anxiety. It was the staying-power of the defence that enabled the Germans at Metz, and at Paris, to hold such extended lines of investment against the attacks of very superior forces, when it was neither possible nor expedient to curtail the operations by a vigorous offensive.

When the rifle was first introduced, the general idea was that the defence would benefit enormously; and it was not realized that the attack had really gained a relative advantage. But the increased range and accuracy of fire-arms, by greatly extending the field of battle, have given the assailants more choice in the selection of ground from which to direct and cover their attacks. At the same time, the defenders are embarrassed by an extent of ground that may be of great value to the enemy, but which they cannot themselves occupy. The increased range has also made it more difficult to obtain early information of movements which may threaten to dislocate the defensive arrangements.

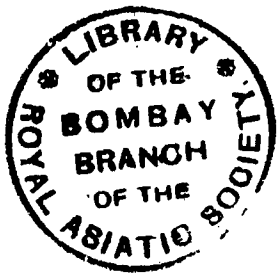
Whenever there has been a great improvement in weapons, most people have imagined that there would be a relative advantage for the defence, but Napoleon was more foreseeing: "The invention of fire-arms changed everything," he observed; "this great discovery was, besides, all to the advantage of the attack, although up to now most people have maintained the contrary." †

It is a disputed point, but smokeless powder will probably favour the offensive, and make it the more necessary for the

* Kraft, "Artillery," p. 334. † Las Cases, ii. p. 439.

defenders to study all the possible courses open to the enemy. The smoke will no longer give the defenders the same indications of what is taking place. Surprises of all kinds will be favoured, and where the assailants' movements are in any way screened by natural features, the absence of smoke will make it more difficult for a general to distinguish between true and false attacks, and thus will be introduced, in still greater force, those fatally dangerous factors, anxious uncertainty and extreme caution. On the other hand, the absence of smoke will make it more difficult to reconnoitre a position, and will favour good shooting, and the defenders should shoot best. Finally, smokeless powder will not give that cover from view which is of such importance to the assailants.

After an impartial comparison between the offensive and the defensive we are forced to the conclusion that, from ancient times up to the present day, the offensive has had superior advantages, and that we feel justified in asserting that, *a deliberate defensive is generally right only when all the conditions are so unfavourable that practically there is no alternative.*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THE OFFENSIVE AND ADVANCED-GUARDS.

"THE qualities suitable for offensive war are activity, boldness, and *coup d'œil;* add to them also intelligence and resolution." * Frederick always preferred the offensive, but says: "To act on the offensive requires good brains, and good generals who have courage. The number is small; I have, at the most, three or four in my army." †

A general cannot act with decision unless he has a settled purpose; and he cannot frame his plan of action till he possesses a certain amount of information. To obtain information, a commander resorts to reconnaissances and to spies. If he can only ascertain for certain, and in sufficient time, the designs of the enemy, he should generally be able to outmanœuvre him, and be the stronger at the decisive point; but it is not at all easy to obtain this information, and consequently a commander has often to act upon very meagre and conflicting reports. A general not only endeavours to acquire information for himself, but also to convey false impressions to his opponent, and this is often attempted through the medium of spies, who may be, however, in the pay of both sides. Consequently, it is only by checks and by counter-checks that a general can satisfy himself that the news regarding the enemy is reasonably probable. There is every

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 57.

† "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiv.

reason to suppose that all the Austrian spies in 1859 were in the pay of the French, because all their information was false.

An able general makes no movement without good reason, and consequently he does not fight a battle unless he hopes to gain an important advantage. But if he is forced to fight against his intention, it is often because he has committed some error, which has enabled the enemy to dictate to him. Frederick, with his usual candour, tells his generals that of five battles he had recently fought, only three were premeditated; two he had been forced to fight because the enemy had outmanœuvred him, and occupied stragetical positions that critically threatened the very existence of his armies. Then he points out the far greater successes that had followed from those three victories where he had predetermined to fight, than from those where he had been forced to fight by the manœuvres of the enemy. "The best battles," says Frederick, "are those that you force the enemy to fight, for it is an established rule that you must oblige the enemy to do what he does not wish to do; and, as your interests are diametrically opposed to his, you must wish to do what the enemy does not wish you to do." * Sometimes a general may begin a battle sooner than he intended, because the enemy makes some mistake of which he would be unwise not to take advantage.

Having carefully selected an important objective, formed a plan, and commenced to carry it out, it is a principle of war to push it through with confidence, resolution, skill, energy, perseverance, daring, and with all our might. It may be that in using all our strength, in case of failure, the risk of disaster is greatly increased; but true prudence does not consist in holding back part of the force of our blow, in anticipation of defeat. True prudence consists in applying all available means to the best advantage to secure the end in view. Half

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiii.

measures are a sure sign of weakness of character, and can never procure great victories. Nothing venture, nothing win. The general who follows up his plan with determination, even if by no means the best plan he ought to have chosen, modifying the details according to circumstances, will certainly defeat an opponent who hesitates, or resorts to half-measures. At the same time, no commander can sketch out in detail a plan beyond the preliminaries. Napoleon said: "One begins, and then one observes."

It is well for students of the art of war to bear in mind that events move fast in battle, and the military situation may be constantly changing; consequently, undue time should not be given to seeking to elaborate the best possible plan. *Das beste ist der feind des guten*—the best is the enemy of the good—or, in other words, a sufficiently good plan is often rejected, and the opportune moment lost, in nervous anxiety to secure perfection. We find that most practical soldiers have been satisfied with a reasonably good plan, carried out opportunely with resolution and confidence. It is easy to be wise after the event, and, with ample time and full information, to frame a plan better than the actual one. This is, no doubt, a very instructive mental exercise, so long as it does not lead a student to presumptuous censure of the military judgment of a commander of recognized skill. It is far more profitable to endeavour to seek out the motive or cause that led a general into apparent and, in many cases, excusable error, than hastily to pass censure.

Having decided to march against the enemy, the army is screened and protected by an advanced guard, aptly termed by Lord Wolseley, "moving outposts." The French at Rossbach had neither advanced guard nor flankers, and paid the penalty of their neglect. The troops may march in a single column, or in many columns, but the broader the front the

better, and the more prepared for battle. Prince Kraft lays great stress upon the necessity of separating the service of security from that of reconnaisance, so that these duties shall be carried out by entirely distinct bodies of troops. "The advanced guards have to keep the prescribed distance from the troops to which they belong, while the reconnoitring patrols should ride on well in front until they come in contact with the enemy. The conduct of the former is governed by the position of their own troops, that of the latter by the position of the enemy." *

"It is necessary that the troops of the advanced guard should be of the best, and that the generals, officers, and soldiers know well their tactics, each one according to the needs of his grade. Troops who are not trained are only a source of embarrassment in the advanced guard." †

The strength and composition of the advanced guard must be adequate to the thorough performance of the varied and arduous duties it has to perform, *e.g.* reconnoitring, screening, clearing the way, repairing roads and bridges, protecting the columns in its rear against surprise on the march, and so forth. If too weak, the main body is endangered, and its progress harassed and checked by the least resistance; but it is distinctly not the business of an advanced guard to fight a great battle, and it is only in pursuit of a defeated enemy that the commander of an advanced guard is justified in attacking with his whole force, and without hesitation. "The duty of an advanced guard," says Napoleon, "does not consist in advancing or in retiring, but in manœuvering." ‡ If too strong, there is the risk of its getting involved in a fight which may develop into a haphazard but serious affair, fought against

* Kraft, "Cavalry," pp. 187, 191.

† Napoléon, "Maximes de Guerre," xxxii.

‡ Ibid.

the wish or intention of the Commander-in-Chief. This was notably the case at Spicheren, where the commander of the Prussian advanced guard acted precipitately. The enemy's actual position had not been reconnoitred, but Von Kamecke conjectured that he was opposed by a mere rear-guard, and he did not hesitate to commence an attack on this false assumption. If the French commander had shown any skill or enterprise, the Prussian advanced guard ought to have been very roughly handled; and although reinforcements did arrive at intervals, the situation of the Prussians throughout the day was critical.

The battle of Woerth was also quite unexpected and unpremeditated by either side, and was a great surprise to all concerned. It was fought because it was practically impossible to obey the orders of the Crown Prince to break off the engagement which had been begun by the generals in closest proximity to the enemy. The German advanced guards were invariably very strong and, in all respects, tactically independent, and their commanders fearlessly engaged the enemy whenever and wherever they encountered him. Thus engagements, unexpected and unauthorized, were frequently brought on, the issues of which, but for circumstances which could not have been fairly reckoned on at the time, such as want of combination and enterprise on the part of the French leaders, might have been attended with grave disaster. Had the French generals taken a vigorous offensive against these advanced guards, and fairly supported each other as opportunity offered, there would have been every probability of defeating them, and the whole situation at the opening of the campaign might have been reversed.

The strategy, the skilful manœuvres, and the arduous marches of the army all lead up to a great battle, where the Commander-in-Chief hopes to reap results more important than

the mere defeat of the enemy's army; consequently, it is most necessary that his plans and combinations, regarding the time and place for the battle, should not be upset by the precipitate action of any subordinate general.

It is clear, therefore, that an advanced guard should carefully avoid being committed, without orders, to a serious action which it cannot break off or withdraw from when desired. If its instructions are to avoid a general engagement, it should, on encountering the enemy in force, take up a strong position and reconnoitre, not only the ground, but, as far as possible, the disposition of the enemy's troops.

It takes a long time for an army to close up to the front, and deploy from the order of march; consequently, by the time the necessary dispositions for attack are completed, it may be too late to begin a great battle. In the event, however, of the advanced guard being unable to break off an engagement, instead of the battle being fought on a preconceived plan, the emergencies of the case may demand that as fast as troops arrive on the scene, they shall be hurried into action, and practically wasted in isolated and disconnected efforts to conform to the exigencies of the occasion, and thus the whole army is exposed to the risk of being beaten in detail. The Germans, though victorious at Spicheren, undoubtedly exposed themselves to this risk.

No decisive results can be expected from such random fighting, which from its nature must often be rather a struggle to stave off disaster than to achieve victory. It involves, too, the great disadvantage that the chief command may change hands more than once during the day, as actually happened three times at Spicheren, and, under these circumstances, there can be no proper direction of the fight, no deliberate manœuvring, and little scope for the display of skill or talent on the side of the assailants.

On rare and special occasions, however, an advanced guard may be ordered to dare and do a great deal; as, for example, when it is hurried on to seize some important position, and hold it at all costs till the main body comes up. Such was the case at Nachod in 1866, and at Vionville in 1870. Or the advanced guard may have to follow a retreating enemy, and endeavour to bring him to bay and hold him fast until the main body arrives; or an unexpected yet legitimate opportunity may present itself of striking a decisive blow, which its commander should unhesitatingly seize on his own responsibility, if the Commander-in-Chief has neglected to arrange for his prompt arrival at the front in case of urgent necessity.

Sometimes by a little extra exertion an advanced guard may promptly occupy, or seize with little loss, an important position that at a later period it would cost the main body heavy losses to capture.

"No German general would have acted as Ney once did in Portugal. In command of Masséna's advance, and in hot pursuit of Wellington, he came up with the enemy deploying for battle on Busaco ridge. 'He had with him,' says Napier, '40,000 infantry. A dark chasm separated the two armies, but Ney's military glance was sure. He instantly perceived that the mountain, a crested and not a table one, could hide no great reserves; that it was only half occupied, and that the allies were moving with the disorder usual on taking unknown ground. He wished, therefore, to attack; but Masséna was ten miles in rear; the officer sent to him waited two hours for an audience, and then returned to Ney with an order to attend the Prince's arrival. Thus a great opportunity was lost. Scarcely 25,000 of Wellington's soldiers were in line.' And this at a time, it may be added, when a single disaster would have led the British Government to

have withdrawn their troops from the Peninsula." * "In war, as in politics," said Napoleon, "the lost moment never returns."

"Battles should not be fought," says Napoleon, "unless beforehand you can count on seventy chances of success in your favour; you ought not even then to fight unless you have reason to hope for further chances in your favour, since, from the nature of things, the fate of a battle is always doubtful; but once you are determined to fight, you should conquer or perish." †

A general action should not be commenced late in the day unless time, for some reason or the other, is particularly valuable. The battle of Gravelotte was begun somewhat late in the day, but it was important not to allow the French time to perfect their defensive dispositions. No commander brings on a great battle unless he hopes to win, and then he requires daylight to reap the fruits of victory. It was not till past noon that the Crown Prince was committed, against his intention, to fight the battle of Woerth, and it was not until half-past one that the general attack began, and it was half-past three before the Froschwiller position was stormed; consequently, although an important victory had been gained, the French escaped because night prevented a vigorous pursuit, and the Germans for a time actually lost touch of the defeated troops. Spicheren is another example; darkness combined with other causes prevented any attempt at pursuit. Ligny also was begun late in the day, and in consequence Napoleon lost all the fruits of his victory, through night and darkness interfering with and retarding his arrangements for pursuit. It would have been well for Napoleon if he had begun the battle of

* Henderson's "Spicheren," p. 98.

† "Pensées de Napoléon," 52.

Waterloo some hours earlier. This delay, and that both before and after Ligny, cannot be certainly or satisfactorily explained, though many explanations have been offered. Lord Wolseley is probably right in considering that the state of Napoleon's health rendered him incapable of any great mental or physical effort.

But, when attacking merely for the purpose of reconnaissance, it is permitted to begin late, so that at all events darkness may put a timely end to the fighting, if it has been found impossible to break off the engagement in any other way. This is, however, no argument against being prepared to hit hard, and to follow up an unexpected success resulting from the action of a reconnaissance in force.

The importance of reconnoitring is acknowledged in theory, but frequently neglected in practice. Hoenig reveals the astounding fact that up to 10.30 a.m. on the 18th of August, it was still not known whether the French were withdrawing from Metz or standing to fight; and up to 11 a.m. Prince Frederick Charles did not know, and until 5 p.m. Moltke did not know, where the French right rested. The reconnoitring service was utterly neglected on the 17th and 18th. When Prince Frederick Charles received information that the French right extended to St. Privat, it was then too late to prevent the isolated action of the 9th corps against Montigny la Grange, where the French right had been supposed to rest. But the information received at 11 a.m. on the 18th, might easily have been known on the evening of the 17th, because we now know that the French would not have interfered with the reconnaissances. They equally neglected to send out patrols, or to watch the approaches from the west, so that they knew as little of the German dispositions as the Germans did of theirs.

"To profit from sudden opportunities, a general must be

constantly with the advanced guard in an offensive movement." * But he should refrain from embarrassing and confusing the officer in immediate command by unnecessary interference.

Having decided, then, when and where to fight, the Commander-in-Chief has next to determine, from the information he has obtained, which is the decisive point, the key of the position to be assailed, and make his dispositions for attack so as to be stronger than the enemy at the particular place selected; which is not necessarily the most decisive point, for that may defy successful attack. Where the enemy probably intends to act on the defensive, obstacles, natural or artificial, will perhaps be discerned, whereas no impediment to a forward movement will obstruct the approaches to those portions of the position from whence a counter-attack may be contemplated; and here the defender will probably mass his reserves. The orders must be clear; and subordinate commanders should receive such complete instructions that they will know how to act under all circumstances, even if the course of events should be very different from what is anticipated.

It frequently happens that parts of the position occupied appear so strong that, trusting to their inaccessibility, the defenders either denude them of troops to a dangerous extent, or neglect to guard them altogether. Their very strength then constitutes their danger, and "often in military history has success been achieved by a movement over ground deemed impassable, and therefore left unwatched." The capture of the heights of the Rotherberg at the battle of Spicheren, of the wood in front of Lee's right wing at Fredericksburg, and of Majuba Hill, are notable examples of disaster due to trusting to the inaccessibility of ground.

* Napier, iii. p. 140.

Polybius attached great importance of the selection of ground, "since it often happens that it is this which makes what seems impossible possible, and what seemed possible impossible." *

The losses which must attend direct attacks have rendered it necessary to resort to manœuvring against one or both of the flanks; but it must be remembered that these turning movements do not necessarily cut the enemy from his line of communications, whereas a direct attack, which pierces the line of battle, will generally drive at least one portion of the army off its direct line of retreat; and the victorious army is more concentrated. This happened at Blenheim, where Marlborough pierced the French centre, and pressing the right wing against the Danube compelled it to surrender. Again at Austerlitz, Napoleon severed from the centre the three columns composing the enemy's left wing, and practically destroyed them. But where the defenders are consolidated, and there is cohesion all along the line of battle, pointing to effective co-operation of the wings, an attack upon the centre may be very risky.

It is a sound principle that a general should never act as the enemy would wish him to do, therefore he should avoid, if possible, fighting on ground that his adversary has had time to study and prepare against attack; it would often be wiser to risk the strategical situation and endeavour by judicious manœuvres to oblige the enemy to fight on other ground. From this principle it follows that a frontal attack should generally be avoided whenever possible. To upset the opposing general's plans is to gain a great physical and moral advantage. But the force that turns another is itself also turned, and must pay all the penalties if the battle is lost. Consequently, turning movements may be very risky unless

* Book ix. 13.

the general who resorts to them has a marked superiority in numbers, or unless the enemy is notoriously wanting in *morale*, mobility, enterprise, or initiative. For example, what becomes of the distant turning force if the enemy is strong enough to make an opportune and successful frontal attack, such as Napoleon made at Austerlitz? Its fate must necessarily be somewhat similar to that of the Austro-Russian turning force that was itself turned and destroyed after Napoleon had stormed the heights of Pratzen. It must be allowed that it is difficult to find similar examples, because the side that takes the initiative in turning movements is usually too strong and too well commanded to be beaten. It is not, however, intended to imply that every army that resorts to turning movements is necessarily well commanded. For example, the French at Magenta were not well commanded. An illustration on a great scale of a strategical turning movement occurred when McMahon, with an army quite unequal to the task, attempted to relieve Metz by turning the German armies. He was necessarily himself turned, and being unsuccessful he lost his army. On the other hand, in the vicinity of Sedan, the Germans made local turning movements which were entirely successful. The operations connected with Mars-la-Tour and St. Privat afford similar examples.

There is another circumstance which gives the army that initiates a turning movement at all events temporary immunity from counter-attack on its communications, and that is the well-known fact that the general who is threatened by a turning movement almost invariably, for the time being, abandons any aggressive designs in order to concentrate his attention on counter-moves suitable to the occasion. The battle of Bull Run is an excellent example, because the Confederates had decided to march on Centreville, that is, on the line of retreat of the advancing Federals, but an order miscarried which delayed

the operation, and meanwhile the Federals turned the Confederate flank, whereupon the latter completely changed their plan in order to conform to the Federal movement—here both sides intended to take the initiative, but the Federals were first in action. Example after example could be given to show that the force which is turned abandons for the time any idea it may have had of a forward movement, giving its immediate attention to the turning force. The Confederates won the battle of Bull Run, and in consequence the Federal turning force was itself turned, and retreated in great disorder, and was only saved from complete ruin by the steady behaviour of the rear-guard. But frequently the baffled turning force retreats and recovers its communications by reason of the exhaustion of the victors, as happened at Albuera when Soult regained his positions without molestation from Beresford.

From the actual battle-field it is hardly possible in these days to march round a flank, except where the fighting is on a small scale; consequently a rolling-up attack must be the result of strategical dispositions made while still at a distance from the field of battle—as happened at Wagram and at Sedan, or the result of extending the deployment of the line of battle beyond one of the opposing flanks, and then wheeling inwards as was done by the Second Bavarian corps at Woerth, and by the Saxon corps at St. Privat.

If the enemy's troops are inferior, it is perfectly safe to manœuvre against the flanks and rear with a freedom that would not otherwise be prudent. For example, Asiatics will often fight with stubborn courage against a direct attack; but immediately their flank or rear is assailed, or even threatened, they are thrown into confusion and disorder, because they possess neither the organization nor the mobility to change front in the presence of the enemy. The victories of Frederick were in a great measure won by out-manœuvring

troops who had not the same mobility as the Prussians, and therefore could not conform to his outflanking movements by suitable counter-moves.

While turning movements are being carried out, the enemy's attention must of course be engaged by demonstrations in front, sufficiently formidable to command respect, and to hold him to his ground; and strong enough to resist any counter-stroke that he may attempt. At the same time, no more men should be employed than are necessary to achieve these ends. In the Eckmuhl campaign, Davoust on the left defended himself passively while Napoleon with his right wing acted offensively. At Wagram, Napoleon was but little perturbed by the apparent success of the Austrians against his left wing, because he was about to strike a far heavier blow on their left wing. At Austerlitz, the allies, supposing that the French would act on the defensive, committed themselves to a formidable turning movement; Napoleon encouraged them to persevere in this false move, and, at the decisive moment, attacked, and broke the opposing front, and then, turning on the long columns that were attempting to move round his right flank, he defeated them with great slaughter. At Spicheren, the attention of the French was so absorbed by the German turning movement that the front attack actually carried the Rotherberg, which was the key of the position.

Numerical superiority will usually give the attacking side the advantage of a broader front of operations, that is, of an overlapping and outflanking attack; but, on the other hand, the defenders will generally move on interior lines, and, if they correctly gauge the military situation, the chance of making some effective counter-stroke may not improbably be offered them by the difficulty to the assailants of keeping up connection, and of arranging a well-timed co-operation, between the turning movements and the frontal attacks. This difficulty

in co-operation was well illustrated in the example, just given, of Austerlitz, where there was a want of connection and co-operation throughout the Russo-Austrian army. Another example was the failure of the Archduke John to co-operate with his brother at Aspern, and again at Wagram. His arrival on the French flank, at Wagram, an hour or so too late, lost the battle for the Austrians. Such a delay on the part of Blucher, or less delay on the part of Grouchy, might have saved Napoleon at Waterloo. The jealousies of commanders have had much to do with the failure of combined operations. It was probably Victor's jealousy of Soult that caused him to fight prematurely the battle of Talavera. We should recall Napoleon's rage when Wellington escaped from almost certain destruction at Talavera: "What a splendid opportunity was lost! My God! What is an army without a chief?" Wagram furnishes an example of the successful co-operation of Davoust with Napoleon.

A converging attack offers more decisive results, but at the same time less certain results—more risk. "When we reflect," says Clausewitz, "how the influence of a single circumstance, accidental or otherwise, increases with time and space, we may see how it is that very wide and complex movements seldom succeed, and that they often lead to disaster." *

A fatal blunder on the offensive is to operate, in the vicinity of a concentrated army, with separate corps which have not good lateral communications. The defeat at Rivoli, where the Adige divided the Austrians, is an example; and again at Hohenlinden, where the Archduke John, in attempting to cross a great forest, divided his army into four columns, and was decisively defeated by Moreau.

Although the principal attack may be directed against a flank, in most cases it must be, locally, a more or less direct

* Clausewitz, iii. p. 167.

attack, subject to all the difficulties and dangers of attacking in front, but neutralized by the fact, that if the movement has been well timed and well executed the defenders will be, to some extent at all events, taken by surprise, and will have to make their arrangements to meet the flank attack under the pressure of a simultaneous attack in front. Mobility is most essential to the assailants, but even possessing it in a high degree, their losses will be very heavy, and they must meet them by employing superior numbers at the decisive point. They cannot avoid the disadvantages of uncertainty of range, of exposure during the advance, and of interruption to their fire by movement; and they have further to face the physical exertion of the attack, and the difficulty of control and command amid much confusion and disorder. It is certain that these physical and moral obstacles to success can only be overcome by great moral or numerical superiority in the crisis of the fight. "The sense of power derived from numbers," says Napier, "is a strong incentive to valour, and obstacles unsurmountable to a few vanish before a multitude." * This was the reason why the small and handy columns of attack of Napoleon's earlier days were superseded in his later campaigns, as his material deteriorated, by the huge masses which ploughed their way, by sheer weight of numbers, sometimes to victory, as at Wagram, but as often to disaster, as at Eylau, at Essling, and Waterloo.

These huge masses are impossible against modern firearms, hence the absolute necessity of discipline sufficiently severe to compel troops to advance and fight in lines. "Positions have often been carried," says Jomini, "by Russian, French, and Prussian columns, with their arms at the shoulder and without firing a shot. This was a triumph of momentum, and the moral effect it produces; but under the cool and

* Napier, iii. p. 308.

deadly fire of the English infantry the French columns did not succeed so well at Talavera, Busaco, Fuentes d'Onore, Albuera, and Waterloo." *

It must be borne in mind that close formations, though they suffer heavy losses, ensure cohesion and supervision and check straggling. It is only the bravest men who disdain to profit by the opportunities of lagging behind; hence the danger of advancing through a wood. "A wood resembles a filter—a great deal goes in, but very little trickles out." Hoenig considers that about 25 per cent. of the 15th division that advanced against St. Hubert, at the battle of Gravelotte, were absorbed by the narrow wood in the Mance ravine.

However, no matter what the formations adopted, the losses in an assault on a well-defended position must always be severe —we cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs—and at the point of decisive collision, a general must be prepared to lose not less than one-fourth of his force, and this altogether without taking count of the heavy losses to troops in rear from unaimed fire. At Woerth, at Mars-la-Tour, and at Gravelotte many German battalions lost more than 25 per cent. The losses of the Germans at Mars-la-Tour were appalling, but mostly due to want of generalship. This battle affords valuable lessons in what not to do. Hoenig calculates that the 38th brigade, about 4400 strong, attacked about 11,925 Frenchmen on the Bruville position. The French had 60 guns and 12 mitrailleuses; the Germans only 36 guns. The chassepot was superior to the needle-gun, but the German field-gun was better than that of the French. The German loss was 52 per cent. (and 74 officers out of 95); the French loss less than 16 per cent. The attack of the 38th brigade was a complete failure, and it was only a miracle that could have made it otherwise.

* "Art of War," p. 297.

At most great battles the victors have concentrated in great force at some decisive point. Where they have not done so, the result has been rather a drawn battle than a victory. At Austerlitz, Napoleon attacked that part of the position between Blosowitz and Pratzen, a front of about 3000 yards, with 32,000 veteran infantry, 2000 cavalry, and 84 guns—that is, with more than 11 men to the yard. His victory was crushing and decisive. Now, compare this battle with Spicheren, where the Germans did not concentrate for any great effort. To all intents and purposes it was a drawn battle.

The choice of the point to attack is influenced by the ground, by the state of the weather, by the direction of the communications on both sides, by the relative quality of the troops, by the extent of the enemy's front and by his dispositions, and last, not least, by what is known of the personal characteristics of the enemy's general.

The following examples give the relative strengths of the assailants and defenders in some of the great battles, and demonstrate that it is quite impossible to lay down any rule as to what should be, or may be, the relative strength of the attack,* for so much depends upon the way the troops are handled, upon their quality, upon the ground, and upon the necessities of each case.

At Prague, 64,000 Prussians attacked, and defeated 74,000 Austrians. At Rossbach, 55,000 allies marched to attack, and were defeated by 22,000 Prussians. At Marengo, 30,850 Austrians attacked, and were finally defeated by 28,127 French. At Austerlitz, 90,000 French attacked, and defeated 80,000 Austrians and Russians. At Eylau, 85,000 French attacked, and defeated 75,000 Russians. At Friedland, 80,000 French attacked, and defeated 50,000 Russians. At Talavera, 50,000 French attacked unsuccessfully 52,000

* See p. 211.

British and Spaniards. At Wagram, 150,000 French attacked 130,000 Austrians, and won what was little better than a drawn battle. At Borodino, 125,000 French attacked, and forced 125,000 Russians to retreat. At Leipsic, 280,000 allies drove back 150,000 French. At Königgrätz, 230,000 Prussians attacked, and defeated 185,000 Austrians. At Woerth, 90,000 Germans attacked, and defeated 40,000 French.* At Mars-la-Tour, the Germans attacked, and were not beaten by a far superior French army—that is to say, they were allowed by the French to score a great strategical success, notwithstanding the tactical defeat of their left wing. At Gravelotte, the Germans in the proportion of almost two to one attacked, and defeated† the French army. At Montretout, the Parisian army attacked unsuccessfully the strong German lines in the proportion of about four to one. At Montbéliard, the Germans held their own against three times their number of French.

The artillery commence the serious business of the battle. The artillery of an advanced guard, never less than a battery, should not be brought into action without a definite object, nor should it be engaged in a very unequal contest. "A strong artillery would appear to be desirable in the case of advanced guards, in order that it may be able quickly to get good effect from its fire." ‡ The guns of the advanced guard assist in the preliminary reconnaissance; and the batteries of the main body are forward in the line of march, because they are required to be early in action; for it is not until they have gained a decided advantage over the batteries

* The numbers in the above examples are taken from Home's "Précis of Modern Tactics."

† The victory on the left more than neutralized the severe repulse on the right. On the whole it was more a strategical than a tactical victory.

‡ Kraft, "Artillery," p. 290.

of the defence that the infantry can advance if the ground is open (in close country infantry can work up to a position); moreover, the time is utilized during which the long columns in rear are closing up and deploying into line of battle. Having covered the deployment of the infantry, and gained a superiority over the hostile batteries, the artillery must next protect and assist the infantry advancing to the attack.

If the effect of the artillery fire has not been crushing, as it was not at Saint-Privat, the infantry must suffer unduly heavy losses; but when it has been decisive, as at Sedan, the infantry escape with comparatively little loss: hence the extreme importance of a powerful artillery and of waiting patiently until its fire has had its full effect.

"An attacking force is formed into three bodies distributed in depth—the first, to develop the attack; the second, to support, reinforce, and complete it; the third, to confirm a success, cover a retreat, or meet any emergency."* The attack should be general, but the assault may be local.

The framers of forms of attack have hitherto overlooked

* "Infantry Drill." We must obey intelligently according to the spirit of the regulations, and not mechanically according to the letter. The drill-books permit of considerable latitude, and as a standard form of attack is wisely forbidden, officers, on each occasion, must think out for themselves a form of attack (because every attack must have some kind of form) suitable to the requirements of the particular case. If there was a normal system of attack, there would be danger of its being applied to cases for which it would be unsuitable.

Further, study and reflection are absolutely necessary, because the drill-book cannot be everywhere explicit. It is necessary to distinguish clearly between the advance to the attack and the actual attack or assault. "For my part I am an enemy to all systems and plans, and prefer the tactics of the moment" (Kraft, "Artillery," p. 285). Referring to an attack over open and level ground: "It is, however, always somewhat misleading to attempt to lay down any detailed instructions for such an enterprise, since in special cases some modification must invariably be made, while in exceptional instances all such rules may be altogether falsified" (Kraft, "Infantry," p. 141).

what is well expressed by Captain Maude, "that the best plan to avoid being killed at all is to kill the other man first," and what was true of the individual was true of the mass also; and the safest way to attain that end is to employ from the outset as many rifles as the space available will contain." The stronger the firing line, the more intense will be its fire, and the greater the losses and the demoralization of the opposing line, and consequently the less the loss in the attacking line, in its supports and reserves, and in the second line. From this it follows that with a strong firing line, the lines in rear may be less strong.

It is sometimes impossible for the artillery to co-operate throughout the attack, because "it is very difficult for the infantry who are advancing from their original position against the enemy, and who naturally have their attention principally fixed upon that enemy, to pay attention to their own artillery in order not to mask their fire." *

As the assailants approach the position, their progress becomes more and more difficult; but, an attack having been once launched, it must be pressed with vigour, supported with judgment, and driven home with resolution.†

* Kraft, "Infantry," p. 206.

† The "Infantry Drill" gives us some instructions regarding the action of the different lines of the attacking force, but is silent on the important question of exercising command in the stress of battle when the same tactical unit provides three distinct lines. We must think out this question for ourselves, because all we learn from the "Infantry Drill" is that each unit should be allotted a specific duty in the attack, and a section of the position in the defence, "for the purpose of command, each section having its separate reserve;" then reference is made to the second and third lines, but it is not laid down how the commands should be distributed and subordinated. The command of the second line, which supports and carries out the attack, is a very important matter. The officer, or officers, in command of the second line must maintain a close connection and tactical cohesion with the first line; but this cannot be done in the attack, if the

The ablest plan of action may fail through feeble and half-hearted execution, while a faulty one may succeed if carried out with vigour and determination. "Attack vigorously, after having well observed where to strike." Napier describes this utterance of Napoleon's as "a simple but profound expression."

Yet to "attack vigorously" is not enough. Skobeleff attacked the "Green Hills" at Plevna with sufficient vigour;* the Federals at Fredericksburg and the French at Waterloo were vigorous enough in their onslaughts; but something more is wanted, and it is that the various attacks made on a position shall have connection and cohesion, and shall all be adequately and timely supported. Sherman says of the Federal army at Bull Run, "We had good organization, good men, but no cohesion, no real discipline, no respect for authority, no real knowledge of war." And at Fredericksburg, "what do we find? Instead of rapid movement, delay and irresolution; instead of the impetuous advance of overwhelming masses,

commanders of sections are directing in the first line. In defence, however, these officers may be in the first line, often with advantage if it offers a good view, provided they maintain a reliable communication with the second line. Whatever is done, every commanding officer should arrange for his place being taken by the next senior, in case he should fall in action. It is quite certain that, under a heavy fire, much interference with subordinates would be impossible, therefore we should practise, under \peace-conditions, that the attack, when set in motion, shall work without undue interference, and shall not be dependent upon anything so precarious as the life of any particular officer. Upon the officer in command rests the responsibility of selecting an objective, and giving to all concerned the guiding idea with the necessary explanations and instructions; but afterwards he cannot interfere with the troops who are closely engaged; they must be left in the hands of subordinates, who should have been trained to take such local initiative as the circumstances of the moment may demand, because the fight will generally be very different in detail to what was anticipated.

* Skobeleff actually took the Green Hills, but several hours later had to retire because unsupported.

a series of ill-supported attacks. The last was his (Burnside's) chief and crowning error." * Napoleon, perhaps the greatest general who has ever lived, made several distinct, unconnected, and unsupported efforts against our line of battle at Waterloo.

To say when support should be sent forward is not easy. Peace experiments are of little value here, because they cannot assist us in gauging an actual situation, or in anticipating the exact moment when the nerves of men who are advancing into the jaws of death have reached their limit of tension. It is only the experienced commander on the spot—with his finger, so to speak, on the pulse of the fight—who can decide when additional troops should be sent forward to replace losses, to steady a fighting line, and to impart to it that fresh impulse which shall launch it definitely and decisively against the position assailed.

"The exact moment for the charge," writes Lord Wolseley, "must be decided by a senior officer on the spot. One in the rear cannot tell when the proper moment has arrived—one must be in actual contact with the enemy, and in the midst of the men about to charge, enabling you to feel the pulse of both sides as it were, in order to know and appreciate clearly when the moment has arrived for rushing upon the enemy."

It is essential that troops should be kept in hand to meet various contingencies. "I am persuaded," wrote Marshal Saxe, "that every corps that is not supported is a corps beaten; for every man who sees nothing behind him to support him, or on which he may retire, is half beaten, and that is why it often happens that the second line gives way whilst the first is still fighting. I have seen that more than once, and, I think, many others besides myself; but no one has perhaps sought out the cause, and it is again the human heart."

* Henderson, p. 136.

With regard to the action of the general reserve,* the following is much to the point: "Victory depends on the direction this impulse shall take. All great generals have clearly recognized this culminating and decisive point. The chief warrior of the century, Napoleon, describes it in terms of heroic simplicity: 'The enemy must be attacked,' he remarked to Marshal St. Cyr, 'with every means possible. After having made the nearest corps engage, they must be left to themselves without troubling one's self too much about their good or bad chances; only good care must be taken not to yield too readily to the demands of their commanders for help.' 'He added,' the Marshal writes, 'that it was only towards the close of the day, when he perceived that the enemy had put the greater part of his forces in action, that he gathered together all that he had been able to keep in reserve, so as to throw on to the battle-field a strong body of infantry, cavalry, and artillery; that the enemy not having foreseen it, he thus made what he called "an event" (*événement*), and that by this means he had always gained the victory.'" †

"Generals who keep back fresh troops for the day following a battle are nearly always beaten. If it is expedient, you ought to employ all, even to your last man, because on the day following a complete success you have no longer any

* Where considerable bodies of troops are concerned, there should be a general reserve quite independent of the third lines of tactical units, because each commander of a tactical unit requires his own third line for local contingencies within the sphere of his action. But, if there should not be a special general reserve, the Commander-in-Chief should exercise a personal control over the third lines of the sections of the front. However, an order of battle based on this local interference with subordinate commanders would be unfortunate, and yet a general of division has no alternative. The general commanding an army corps, on the other hand, has a complete tactical unit available as a general reserve, and therefore need not interfere unduly with his subordinate commanders, nor rob them of their battalions in order to form a general reserve.

† Revue des Deux Mondes, 1889.

obstacle to surmount; prestige alone secures new triumphs for the conqueror." * And yet Napoleon himself committed an error of judgment in refusing to employ the Guard at Borodino.† Waterloo is not a parallel case; here the reserves might have been employed to cover retreat, instead of trying to snatch victory in a battle that was already hopelessly lost. It was not good generalship, it was an act of desperation.

The "where" to strike is sometimes comparatively easy to decide; but the decisive "when" is another matter, and it requires undoubtedly the highest qualities in a commander to decide exactly *when* the moment for decisive action has come. Sometimes the advanced troops decide this important matter for themselves. "In all human undertakings," says Polybius, "opportuneness is the most important thing, but especially in operations of war." ‡ "Success in war," said Napoleon, "has so much to do with *coup d'œil* and the decisive moment that the battle of Austerlitz, won so completely, would have been lost if I had attacked six hours earlier." § It has often happened in a general action that there was at one time a chance for the defeated side, but the commander failed to seize it *when* it was within his reach. Napier calls them "those happy occasions which in war take birth and flight at the same instant." Such a chance was offered to the French at Blenheim, to Melas at Marengo, to the Prussians at Auerstädt, to the Archduke at Aspern, and again at Wagram, to Ney at Busaco, to Frossard at Spicheren and to the French at Mars-la-Tour, but it was not taken. "Fortune," said Napoleon, "is a woman; avail yourself of her favour while she is in the humour. Beware that she does not change through resentment at your neglect."

* "Maximes de Napoleón," xcvi.
‡ Book ix. 15.
‡ See p. 126.
§ Las Cases, i. p. 294.

Napoleon has also said: "War consists only of accidents, and, although reputed to comply with some general principles, a general ought never to lose sight of what may enable him to profit by these accidents; this is the characteristic of genius. In war there is only one favourable moment; the great faculty is to avail one's self of it." * "In war, as in politics, the lost moment never returns." †

In the final assault, the foremost troops will be completely out of control, and no officer can influence more than the few men in his immediate vicinity, because in the smoke and uproar he is neither seen, nor heard, nor heeded. We must practise, under peace-conditions, to control the fire, not forgetting that "when once the fire of the skirmishers has grown hot, it is no longer possible to exercise any influence over it." ‡ The "Infantry Drill" states, "Victory is effectively prepared at medium, but is gained at decisive ranges." But it may not infrequently happen that the victory will not only be effectively prepared but also practically gained at medium ranges, so that on the advance of the infantry to the assault, it will be found that the defence has quite collapsed. However, if the actual assault is resisted, its success will depend almost entirely upon the physical courage which animates the troops. Up to a certain point, it would be vain to try and persuade a man that it is safer for him to advance than to retire; but when he is close to the enemy, very close indeed, there comes a crisis when the situation is unbearable, and when his instinct tells him truly that he should close and have done with it. This is well expressed in the "Conscript of 1813": "Then we all commenced to run, because the quicker we arrived, the less time the others had to fire—everyone understood that."

* "Maximes de guerre," xcv. † "Penseés de Napoleón," 18.
‡ Kraft, "Infantry," p. 174.

"One of the most trying things for the captain and subaltern," says Lord Wolseley, "is to make their men who have found some temporary haven of shelter from the enemy's fire leave it, and spring forward in a body to advance over the open upon the position to be attacked. It is even difficult to make a line of men who have lain down, perhaps to take breath after a long advance at a running pace, rise up together. To some men the horror of hearing bullets plump into the bodies of their comrades with a horrible thud seems to drive the blood from their hearts and to completely demoralize them. We are all inclined to make fun of death; but when he keeps jostling you in a crowd, taking away those on your right and left, when your eye can scarcely rest upon a comrade for a minute without seeing him fall, death on these close and intimate terms appears in a very different guise to what we have imagined when laughing at him over a good dinner at home." * It should be impressed upon every man, so that all may be imbued with the truth, that the losses are always less if the attack is carried out with vigour, without hesitation, and is successful. The more stout-hearted the one side, the more faint-hearted the other; this is a truism, but difficult to make any practical use of; all men are not heroic, and some will persuade themselves that their individual regard for self-preservation cannot affect the result. It is in night attacks, in woods, and in loose formations that such men find most opportunities for behaviour disloyal to their comrades.

The final assault is very unlike the steady performance so often witnessed at field-days; and every close and deadly encounter between man and man is accompanied with a fury that is perforce absent from its passionless imitation, and hence follows on such occasions the bayoneting of wounded men, and sometimes the savage cry of "no quarter." "Attacking

* *Fortnightly Review*, 1888; "Courage."

the enemy with fury, they, forced back into the river all those who had crossed it to cut off our retreat, and as there is nothing so terrible as troops who, after having suffered a check, retake the offensive, the horsemen of the divisions Excelmans and Roussel d'Urbal cut down every one they could overtake." *

When troops meet with stubborn resistance, it gives birth to a sort of mad excitement that frequently causes the victors to lose their self-control, to abandon their humanity, and to act with a savage ferocity that soils their laurels with the blood of those who in calmer moments would command their pity and compassion—but such is war, an almost unmitigated evil.

If the attack fails and the defenders make a counter-stroke, the disorder and confusion are beyond description. This happened to the Romans at the Trebbia, and to the French at Waterloo. It is not possible to lay down any procedure that can be followed under such circumstances. All that can be done is to endeavour to rally the men on the first opportunity, but if there are no formed troops in rear, then there is no salvation for the defeated army.

But if, on the other hand, the assault succeeds, then is the time to let loose the cavalry and the horse artillery, and to call up reinforcements; because the actual stormers will be in too great confusion, and probably too much shaken and exhausted, to make any further effort for some time; and in this state, although victorious, they may be easily driven back by fresh troops. The elation and excitement of the victors, who have passed through the ordeal of a very heavy fire and a successful assault, amounts almost to frenzy; but it is an emotion that cannot be relied upon to sustain immediately another great effort either offensive or even defensive.

We should do more to prepare our troops, when acting on the offensive, to take advantage of fogs, bad weather,

* De Marbot, iii. p. 292. Battle of the Katzbach, 1813.

darkness, moonlight, and very close country, so as to neutralize the long range and deadly effect of modern fire-arms. We should also constantly practise our men in fighting with few, or even no officers. "I asked the original garrison why they had abandoned the churchyard to the enemy. They openly said, 'We had no officers left to tell us what to do, and so we went off.'" *

The generals of antiquity were skilful in resorting to stratagems. Cæsar resorted to stratagem at the great battle of Pharsalia, where he defeated Pompey. The opposing general said that in Sylla he had to contend both with a fox and a lion, but the fox gave him more trouble than the lion. At the Trasimene Lake, Hannibal successfully deceived, ensnared, and finally destroyed a large Roman army. Marlborough and Napoleon owed many of their successes to stratagems; Wellington had not, or scorned, the faculty of dissimulation. In the Italian campaign of 1796, Napoleon led the Austrians to believe that he would attack the left, and thereby induced them to weaken the centre, which he then defeated. In 1800, just before Marengo, the stratagem of the Army of Reserve assembling at Dijon, and the reports he circulated, enabled Napoleon to cross the St. Bernard with a large army. Again, at Austerlitz, the Emperor laid a snare when he led the enemy to believe that he would act on the defensive, and he cunningly encouraged the three columns composing the Russo-Austrian left wing to persevere in the false move which led to their destruction. During the Egyptian war of 1882, the stratagem by which Lord Wolseley occupied the Suez Canal and landed unopposed at Ismailia was perfectly successful; and yet how unlikely it seemed, at the time, that the enemy would be deceived!

Frederick considered that cunning often succeeds when

* Kraft, "Infantry," p. 82. Refers to a fight in a village near Paris.

force fails, and that it is as necessary to resort to the one as to the other. Force may often repel force, but more often yields to cunning. The aim and end of all stratagem is to commit the enemy to false moves while concealing our own intentions, or to make him attribute to us designs quite different from those we propose to execute. Frederick refers to the last two campaigns of Turenne as supplying the best examples of stratagems.* Cæsar heard that Cicero, with sixty thousand men, was hemmed in by the Gauls, and in sore straits; he was at a great distance, but assembling seven thousand men he hastened to the aid of Cicero. The Gauls despising such a small force, marched against Cæsar with great confidence. In order to enable a small force to gain advantage over a large one, Cæsar resorted to stratagem; he feigned a hasty retreat till he occupied a position suitable for his small army; and in order to still further deceive the enemy, he forbade all offensive action, and by making elaborate works to appear to place his chief reliance in the passive defence of ramparts. The stratagem was successful; the Gauls, far superior in numbers, treated him with contempt, and advanced against his camp without proper precautions as if certain of an easy victory. Cæsar then made a sudden and unexpected sally, and utterly defeated them.†

In mountain warfare, supervision is difficult, and officers must be prepared for a more or less disjointed attack, induced by irregularities in the ground which it is often impossible to reconnoitre thoroughly beforehand. As has been said before, numbers inspire confidence; consequently, when there is an immunity from long-range fire—as in savage warfare, in close or in mountainous country, in thick weather, and at night—close formations may be adopted to rush the enemy, or to steady the men to resist similar shock tactics.

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xi. † Plutarch.

When a great battle is imminent, it is unwise for a commander to detach any part of the force available, unless he is very confident of victory. There are many examples in history of misfortune, or misfortune narrowly escaped, in consequence of doing so. Melas would, in all probability, have made perfectly certain of the victory at Marengo, if he had not unnecessarily detached 2500 cavalry to arrest the march of Suchet, who was at too great a distance to be taken into consideration. Napoleon himself at Marengo, although ultimately victorious, was as nearly as possible defeated because he detached Desaix to reconnoitre towards Rivalta; indeed, he was at first defeated, but the return of Desaix restored the battle. "At Marengo," said Napoleon, "I was beaten till six o'clock at night; next day I was master of all Italy." * There is little to be urged in defence of Wellington for having kept 18,000 men at Hal, while the battle of Waterloo was being fought within a distance of ten miles. After Ligny, Napoleon detached Grouchy with 32,000 men and 96 guns. It is instructive to reflect and form an opinion whether it was necessary, or expedient, to have detached so large a force at a time when the Emperor was about to attack the English army. But to condemn hastily so great a general as Napoleon, merely because Grouchy performed no useful service, would be indeed presumptuous; and it is always easy to be wise after the event. But it is a maxim of war that we cannot be too strong on the day we fight a decisive battle. No one has done more to impress upon us the truth of this maxim than Napoleon. Indeed, it is far less profitable to criticize a master of war than to endeavour to account for his motive in making what after-events may prove to have been a false move.

After a detachment has been sent away the whole situation

* Alison, x. p. 99.

may change. The enemy who was to be attacked may receive reinforcements and himself attack; and in that case a single battalion may turn the balance in favour of victory or defeat. Again, should the enemy retire in good order on reinforcements, the absence of the detachment may prevent a vigorous pursuit. In fact, "when you contemplate fighting a great battle, give yourself every chance of success, especially if you have to deal with a great captain; for, if you are beaten, even if you are in the midst of your magazines, and near your fortress, woe to the vanquished!" *

The question of making detachments is so important that it will be instructive to consider Frederick's views. He says that it is an ancient rule that he who separates his forces will be beaten in detail. If a battle is impending, all available troops should be assembled; they cannot be better employed than on the field of battle. Generals who have disregarded this principle have nearly always been beaten. It is not asserted that detachments should under no circumstances be made, but that it is so dangerous to do so that the risk should not be run, unless for the most important reasons, and then only at the opportune time, and, perhaps, never when acting on the offensive. Of course the advanced guard is not to be considered in the light of a detachment, provided it is within reach of the main body, and does not risk a general action. On the defensive, as Napoleon was, strategically, in France in 1814, a general is often obliged to make detachments. The defensive naturally lends itself to detachments for political or moral reasons, or because the ordinary commander endeavours to preserve and hold everything, while the master of war fixes his attention on the decisive points only, warding off the heavy blows while suffering patiently minor evils in order to avoid still greater. "Qui trop embrasse, mal étreint." The

* Napoléon, "Maxims de Guerre," xxxi.

most essential consideration is the enemy's field-army. "There are generals," says Frederick, "who detach troops when about to attack the enemy, in order to take him in rear when he is engaged; but it is a very delicate manœuvre, because these detachments usually go astray, and arrive either too soon or too late. Charles XII. sent out a detachment the evening before the battle of Pultava. This corps wandered from the road, and the king was beaten. To make detachments on the day of battle is always wrong. Troops should not be detached till after a victory; or if detached at any other time, they should be within hail of the army. Detachments that reduce the army by a third, or by a half, are very dangerous, and to be condemned." * According to Frederick's notions of conducting war, Napoleon did wrong in detaching Grouchy with 32,000 men and 96 guns when he was marching against Wellington.

Undoubtedly with regular troops numbers count for much. It has been said that Providence fights on the side of the big battalions. Napoleon was overpowered by numbers, not by superior generalship, in the fierce fighting at Dresden, Leipsic, and Waterloo. There is no modern example, except Rossbach, of an army, on the field of battle, attacking and defeating decisively a regular army that was twice its numerical strength. If the enemy appears to be drawing in his detachments, it is generally an indication that he is planning an attack with his whole force.

"If the victory has been complete," says Frederick, "then one can make detachments, either to cut off the retreat of the enemy, or to seize his magazines, or to besiege three or four towns at the same time." †

It would be wrong to condemn all detachments on principle;

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. x.

† "Ibid., Art. xxii.

whether it is wise or unwise to make them must depend upon the circumstances affecting each case. In nothing does a general more require a sound judgment than in deciding whether to employ detachments, and how, and in what strength. It may be laid down that they should, generally speaking, be avoided, and where employed the commander should receive very distinct written instructions.

Detachments are made to mask or besiege fortresses or intrenched camps, to cover sieges, to protect the communications, to make diversions, to oppose hostile detachments, to undertake combined operations, to threaten the enemy's communications, to seize important places, to oppose the junction of hostile forces, to give a hand to reinforcements, to pursue a portion of the enemy, to attack or protect a convoy, and to deceive the enemy.

Governments frequently send out distant detachments because, from want of military knowledge, civilians overlook the fact that it is of secondary importance to attack the extremities, because no decisive results can follow unless injury is done to the vital parts. For example, England will not be conquered by expeditions against her colonies. "I look upon the Northern League," wrote Nelson, "like a tree, of which Russia is the trunk, and Sweden and Denmark the branches. If I can get at the trunk and hew it down, the branches fall of course; but I may lop the branches and yet not be able to fell the tree, and my power must be weaker when its greatest strength is required."

Detachments may be productive of great advantage if wisely employed, but if unwisely, the results may be fatal, because the whole secret of war is being the strongest at the decisive point. Detachments may be attacked in succession, or the main body may be overwhelmed during their absence. If detachments are made in the theatre of war, arrangements should be made

for timely co-operation. They must either fall back on support, or support must be sent to them. This was not done by Napoleon in 1813, consequently Vandamme was overwhelmed at Culm, and this disaster neutralized the victory at Dresden. When a detachment is made for a turning movement, careful calculations and arrangements must be made for timely co-operation.

In the Franco-German war, the Germans re-took many villages by night attacks. If the assault be at night, with or without moonlight, the assailants get very close without much loss; but they cannot keep down the fire, though necessarily unaimed, of the defenders, whereas marksmen may to a certain extent do so in daylight. Probably this accounts for the fact that the Germans in broad daylight crowned the covered way of Strasburg by flying sap. It is possible that in future battles, the preliminary movements may be made before daylight, and an advanced position taken up corresponding with the 1st parallel at sieges.

We cannot regulate a battle by exact arithmetical calculations, because the most important factors are indeterminate. There is the unforeseen, the personality of the opposing generals, their skill, talent, personal ascendency, state of health, and many circumstances which carry great weight, but have an ever-varying value. After the severe fighting at Dresden in 1813, Napoleon was seized with sudden and violent sickness, and at the same time came distressing news of the defeats of his marshals; he repeated to himself these words of Corneille :—

> "J'ai servi, commandé, vaincu quarante années.
> Du monde, entre mes mains, j'ai vu les destinées ;
> Et j'ai toujours connu qu'en chaque événement,
> Le destin des états dependait d'un moment."

And again at St. Helena, "when Bertrand asked for another

minute, he replied, 'No! in war half a minute is too much to lose. You would have the cavalry upon you and be cut in pieces.'" *

Lucius Marcius, on assuming command after the deaths of the two Scipios, wishing to take the offensive, spoke as follows: "I know that the measure appears to you daring, but it is when your circumstances are so difficult as to be almost desperate, that the boldest counsels are the safest. For if, when the critical moment arrives, and an opportunity which must be seized at once is lost, you delay ever so little; you may afterwards seek, and seek in vain, to repair the consequences of your past neglect." † At Copenhagen Nelson wrote to his chief: "The measure may he thought bold, but I am of opinion that the boldest is the safest; and our country demands a most vigorous exertion of her force, directed with judgment."

Meeting with unexpected disasters after gaining the battle of Dresden, Napoleon said to Murat, "This is the fate of war—exalted in the morning, low before night. There is but one step between triumph and ruin."

* O'Meara, ii. p. 359.

† Livy, xxv. p. 38.

PURSUITS.

WHEN, after a desperate struggle, the day is at last won, every nerve should be strained to reap the fruits of the victory by a close and effective pursuit, so as to turn ordinary defeat into disastrous rout and irretrievable ruin. The confusion among the victors at such a moment is very great, and the exhaustion tremendous; but among the vanquished the exhaustion will be at least equal; and the confusion and disorder ten times, perhaps a hundred-fold greater; and therefore, now is the time to strike hard, and to exert our whole remaining energy to crush whatever vitality may yet exist in the foe.

On every side lie dead and wounded men; the field is covered with wreck, ruin, destruction, and desolation. After a victory, as after a defeat, everything and everybody seem for a time to be hopelessly disorganized and distracted. But all this must be disregarded: everything must give way to the one consideration of the pursuit of the enemy, and the completion of his discomfiture.

All the troops that are in any way fit to march—cavalry, horse artillery, and mounted infantry especially—must press on his tracks, work round the flanks, and cut in boldly on his communications. It is no time for rest, neither ought we to grant him any: if we are exhausted, he is more exhausted; if our losses have been heavy, his have been heavier still; we are elated by victory while he is depressed and demoralized by defeat. At such a time, we must not be over-anxious about supplies; they will probably fall into our hands as we press

forward in pursuit. Minutes are precious now, and while we wait to calculate, the enemy may slip away beyond our reach. His first rear-guard position must be attacked without hesitation; later on we may have to be more cautious, but at first we cannot be too daring; caution is entirely out of place. We must strike while panic is abroad, and while demoralization depresses him.

It is not often that a general gets such a chance; yet many have failed to take it; and by being unable, by neglecting, or refusing to follow up their victory at once, have lost the fruits of their own skill, and of the valour of their troops. But it is going a little too far to say that there can be no excuse for neglecting to pursue. After the dearly bought victory of Wagram, the French were terribly exhausted and did not pursue; but Napoleon was exceedingly angry, and considered that at all events the cavalry generals of the Guard were greatly to blame: "Was ever anything seen like this? Neither prisoners nor guns! This day will be attended with no results!" *

And yet he himself was entirely to blame for the inexcusable delay in issuing orders for the pursuit after Ligny; and the effect was fatal, for the true line of the Prussian retreat was lost in consequence; and, Grouchy's pursuit being misdirected, his corps of 32,000 men was too late to take any part in the decisive battle of Waterloo. Livy states that it was firmly believed, that one day's delay in following up the great victory of Cannæ saved the Roman empire. Maharbal, the master of the Horse, after having urged Hannibal in vain to commence the pursuit at once, observed, "Of a truth the Gods have not bestowed all things upon one person. You know how to conquer, Hannibal, but you do not know how to make use of your victory." †

* Alison, viii. p. 169.

† Livy, xxii. p. 51.

On the other hand, when a pursuit has been immediate and effective, the demoralization on the one side has been as complete as the success on the other, and the results have been decisive. Consider the effect of the French pursuit of the Prussians after Jena and Auerstädt; and of the Prussian pursuit of the French after Waterloo — the two most perfect examples perhaps that can be quoted.

It is easy to imagine that a beaten and retreating army must be much disorganized and demoralized, and rarely in a condition to court a battle. The more reason, therefore, to press it, and bring it to bay, and to force fighting; and consequently, the pursuing army should not hesitate to attack vigorously. To add to its difficulties, a retreating army has often to withdraw from its positions and make a night march, which is in itself a sufficiently difficult operation for troops that have not been demoralized by defeat. In the retreat to Corunna, when the troops had not been seriously engaged at all, the disorder was frightful. "Night marches," says Napier, "are seldom happy, but that from Lugo to Betanzos cost the army in stragglers more than double the number of men lost in all the preceding operations." * If a retreating army is very inferior in cavalry and horse artillery it should be, under ordinary conditions, at the mercy of the victors.

"When, as in instances of pursuits," says Lord Wolseley, "the services of cavalry are urgently required, do not be deterred by a dread of using up your horses; you could not lose them in a better cause. Don't fritter away your cavalry during an action; keep it fresh for the pursuit when the day is yours." The advance of the cavalry on Cairo after the fighting at Tel-el-Kebir is a good example. "In our battles against Napoleon's troops, and lately against the Russians, we have shown ourselves incapable of reaping the benefit of victory.

* Napier, i. p. 356.

Wellington won many battles, but never delivered any very crushing blow to his opponents, because he failed to pursue. Waterloo is no exception, for the pursuit was effected by the Prussians." * If Wellington did not pursue, it must not be overlooked that the circumstances were special. His battles were mostly fought on the defensive, and his troops were morally and physically exhausted by the hard fighting necessary to repulse very determined assaults. He was victorious in the end, but his losses were always severe; and, in such cases, if the enemy retires in fairly good order, much preliminary reforming must precede any attempt to pursue, and the opportunity may be lost. The following is Wellington's description of the British army after the victory of Vittoria in 1813:—"We started with the army in the highest order, and up to the day of the battle nothing could get on better; but that event has, as usual, totally annihilated all order and discipline. The night of the battle, instead of being passed in getting rest and food to prepare for the pursuit of the following day, was passed in looking for plunder. The consequence was, that the troops were incapable of marching in pursuit of the enemy, and were totally knocked up. The rain came on and increased their fatigue, and I am quite convinced that we have now out of the ranks double the amount of our loss in the battle; and that we have lost more men in the pursuit than the enemy have; and yet we have never in any one day made more than an ordinary march."

After the hard-fought battle of Malplaquet, Marlborough and Eugène were utterly unable, from exhaustion and losses, to pursue, consequently the French fell back a few miles, in perfect order and not demoralized. The Confederates won a great battle at Bull Run, but much as their leaders wished to follow it up and if possible occupy Washington, they agreed

* Lord Wolseley, "Soldier's Pocket-book."

that, the army as a whole was too much exhausted and disorganized to undertake the operation, and perhaps ammunition and provisions were inadequate—still, a more vigorous pursuit was possible. Beresford won the battle of Albuera, but he had been far too roughly handled to even contemplate a pursuit. Napier said: "The laurel is nobly won when the exhausted victor reels as he places it on his bleeding front." "Eighteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill!" How would pursuit have been possible?

Even the greatest general of modern times was not always prompt to pursue. After the battle of Friedland in 1807, "if Napoleon had followed up his success with his wonted vigour, the Russian host would have been utterly annihilated. But on this occasion, as on many others in the memorable campaign of 1812, it was apparent that the vigour of the Emperor in following up his victories was by no means equal either to what it had been in the German or Italian wars, or to the successes which he claimed at the moment—a circumstance for which his panegyrists find it impossible to offer any explanation, but which is susceptible of easy solution, when the desperate nature of the resistance opposed to him in these northern latitudes, and the consequent magnitude of his losses, is taken into consideration."* "In the pursuit he exerted none of his usual vigour, and threw away, in the prosecution of a minor object, the fairest opportunity he had ever enjoyed of destroying the Russian army."† And yet the French losses at Friedland were not so heavy as at Marengo, at Austerlitz, at Jena, or at Eylau.

Spicheren affords another example of the victors being too exhausted to pursue. The French retired in good order, there was no rout; and the Prussians were utterly exhausted,

* Alison, vii. p. 37. † Ibid., vii. p. 39.

and in such confusion, that not only were battalions from different regiments hopelessly mixed up, but battalions from different brigades, different divisions, different corps, and even from different armies. Companies from the same battalions were separated by miles of dense forest, the losses had been very heavy, and a large proportion of officers had fallen, ammunition and rations had to be distributed, and, to add to the confusion, darkness came on while the battle still raged. It is true that the moon rose before long, but who can read Colonel Henderson's account of this battle, and say that the Prussians were in condition even to attempt a pursuit?

If formed troops are available, pursuit should commence at once; but it would be fatal to attempt to pursue, with a confused mob of armed men, an enemy retiring in fair order, until tactical cohesion has been in a measure restored. The charge of a few squadrons might change victory into defeat.

Wellington won a great battle at Vittoria in 1813, but he did not follow up his success by a pursuit, because the fighting had "totally annihilated all order and discipline." "The battle of Wellington," says Napier, "was the stroke of a battering-ram, down went the wall in ruins; the battle of Napoleon was the swell and dash of a mighty wave, before which the barrier yielded and the roaring flood poured onwards covering all." *

Now let us record Frederick's views: "Of what use is the art of knowing how to conquer if you do not know how to take advantage of your success. To spill the blood of one's soldiers carelessly, is to pitilessly lead them to butchery; and not to pursue the enemy on certain occasions, in order to augment his fear, or to make more prisoners, is to hand over again to chance an engagement which has just been decided in your favour. However, want of supplies and great fatigue

* Napier, vi. p. 196.

may prevent your pursuit of the vanquished. It is the fault of the General-in-Chief if you lack provisions. When he offers battle, he has a plan; and if he has a plan, he must prepare everything that is necessary for its execution; in consequence he should have provided bread or biscuit for eight or ten days. As for the fatigue, if it is not excessive, it is necessary on exceptional days to do exceptional things." *

The following interesting extract is from the writings of Marshal Saxe:—"But when we undertake so much as to fight a battle, we must know how to profit by the victory, and above all, not content ourselves with having gained a battle-field as is the laudable custom. Men follow religiously the words of a proverb which says that it is necessary to make a golden bridge for our enemy. That is false; on the contrary, it is necessary to press him and follow him to the bitter end; and all this retreat which seems so fine will, if it is disturbed, soon be turned into a rout. A detachment of ten thousand men may destroy an army of a hundred thousand that is running away. Nothing inspires so much terror and causes so much damage, because everything perishes there; and it requires many efforts to restore order; besides, we are rid of the enemy for a long time. But many generals do not care to finish the war so soon.

"If I wished to give examples in support of my opinion, I could find any number; I will mention but one. At the battle of Ramilies, as the French army was retiring in good order on a rather narrow plateau, bounded on both sides by deep ravines, the allied cavalry followed at a walk, as if on parade; and the French army was retiring also very slowly in twenty lines, and more perhaps, because the ground was very narrow. An English squadron approached two French battalions, and commenced to skirmish. These two battalions,

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxii.

supposing that they were about to be attacked, faced about, and fired a volley at that squadron. What happened? All the French troops gave way at the sound of this volley; the cavalry rode away at full speed; and all the infantry dashed into the two ravines in a horrible confusion; so that, in a moment the ground was clear, and not a man was any longer to be seen.

"If any one comes to me, after that, to boast of the good order of retreats, and the prudence of those who make a golden bridge for the enemy, after they have defeated him in battle, I shall say that they serve their master badly. This does not mean that it is necessary to follow the enemy with all one's troops. It is necessary to take one corps and order it to press the enemy as long as the day lasts, and the army must follow this corps leisurely and in good order;* when the enemy is once in flight, we could chase him with air-bladders. But if he whom you send in pursuit commences to skirmish, and to march with precautions, that is to say that he executes manœuvres which ought only to be made by the army that is following him, it is not worth the trouble to send him in pursuit. He must attack, press back and follow without ceasing. Every manœuvre is good then; it is only the prudent ones that are worth nothing." And yet the fact remains that although Marshal Saxe won many victories, he never followed up with the vigorous pursuit he advocates.

All great generals have insisted upon every effort at pursuit, and yet they have all from time to time neglected this vigorous pursuit after victory. This makes a reflecting man suspect that there must have been some restraining cause that has not been fully appreciated by military writers. Some of the restraining causes have been given in the examples already quoted, others will now be stated. Lord Wolseley says, "The

* The armies of that time did not possess much mobility.

general must make up his mind quickly as to what he intends doing; there is a general tendency to idle during the first moments of relief to the strained nerves which victory brings with it, the best men even are apt to indulge in idle talk of the events that have just taken place, instead of making arrangements for what still remains to be done."

Hannibal has always been blamed for not following up Cannæ by an immediate march on Rome; but the advantages he had gained were chiefly due to his cavalry, and they could not be used in a siege. "Not one nation of Italy," says Plutarch, "had yet declared for him. He might have judged it necessary to gain some of them before he attempted the capital. If he had attempted the capital first, and without success, he would not have been able to gain any one nation or city."

The physical and mental endurance may reach their limits. Prince Kraft writes of a commander of historical renown, who was so keen and impetuous while the battle lasted that he could never bring himself to see that the time had come to stop the fighting. But the next day he was so prostrated by the strain on the nervous system that he was not in a condition to issue any orders until late in the day. This explains to Prince Kraft why his battles were never followed by a hot pursuit early next morning. Can we too often insist that human nature with its strong and its weak points is a factor of first consideration in war. "Men who have been fighting for hours," writes Lord Wolseley, "and fighting very likely on badly filled stomachs, are too tired to pursue, and are very probably out of hand from battalions being mixed one with another. However, if you have no fresh troops at hand, you must pursue with those you have—don't spare your men at such a critical moment. Many a well-planned and successfully carried out action has led to no result, because the general thought his men too tired to pursue. One of a

general's difficulties lies in deciding upon the number of men he will preserve intact during an action for pursuit when it is over; he may so cripple himself by doing this whilst the action is in progress that he may fail in taking the enemy's position, which, after all, is the primary object of all his movements."

In his letters on strategy, Prince Kraft distinguishes clearly between the strategical pursuit and the tactical pursuit, between *following* an army that is voluntarily retiring, and *pursuing* an army that is retreating after defeat. At Spicheren, one corps only of the French army had been seriously engaged, there had been no decisive battle, consequently the strategical retirement was voluntary, and as the German concentration was not complete, they could only follow cautiously, and their movements were strategical not tactical. On the contrary, at Jena-Auerstädt there had been a decisive victory, and it was only natural that it should be followed by an energetic tactical, and strategical, pursuit of the routed army; there was no need of caution. The same thing happened at Waterloo.

To give a few more examples of pursuit. On the 4th of August, at Weissembourg, an advanced division only was defeated, and behind was McMahon's army; the German concentration was incomplete, their cavalry even had not moved up, therefore there could be neither tactical nor strategical pursuit. The action had been undertaken merely to cover the concentration and not as the prelude to a vigorous offensive. The Germans could only follow and keep touch. Then, on the 6th of August came the battle of Woerth as a surprise to all concerned. Here there was a great victory by very superior numbers, and a tactical pursuit up to a certain point, the defiles of the Vosges, where fresh troops and darkness checked this pursuit; but had the German commander been aware of what we now know regarding the complete rout of McMahon's troops, he would probably have continued to

press on during the night. Here also the Germans were not ready, their concentration was incomplete, consequently they could only follow the French and keep touch by means of their cavalry. On this same day was also fought Spicheren, already mentioned. On the 14th of August Borny was fought, a doubtful tactical victory that could be followed up by no tactical pursuit, because the French were protected by the forts. However, it was an undoubted strategical success, because it delayed the French retreat, and the strategical *following* became more decided, and a great strategical wheel to the right was urged on without hesitation. On the 16th of August Mars-la-Tour was fought; and here again there could be no tactical pursuit because the Germans could barely hold their own, but the strategical gain was immense, for Bazaine counter-ordered the retreat on Verdun which was still possible. Now the German strategy became still bolder, and another great wheel was made to the right, so that the army faced its base. On the 18th of August Gravelotte was won, but by the nature of things there could be neither tactical nor strategical pursuit.

Throughout the campaign, the Germans displayed great circumspection. Had they attempted to rush on after the battle of Spicheren, they might have met with a serious check from the French corps in rear. It is opportune to recall the defeat of Napoleon at Laon, in 1814, when in pursuit of Blucher, who had fallen back on reinforcements.

The pursuers are naturally far less impeded by impedimenta than the pursued, but it is far less profitable to criticize and censure generals who have not pursued after a victory, than to endeavour to seek out the reason or the restraining cause.

THE DEFENSIVE.

A DEFENCE may be active, or it may be passive, but the loss of the initiative may deprive a commander of any choice in the matter. A purely passive defence is generally to be condemned; but there are cases where, under ordinary circumstances, no advantage would be gained by offensive action, or at all events by more than local or restricted offensive action; as, for example, when the besiegers are defending their positions against a sortie; when a rear-guard endeavours to check pursuit; or when an inferior force, expecting reinforcements, strives to stay the advance of a superior enemy. In this last case great judgment is necessary. At Mars-la-Tour the Germans endeavoured to stay the retreat of the French, and a purely passive defence would not have succeeded. However, the 38th Brigade made an injudicious attack because it ignored its inferior strength—a single German brigade attacked a whole French corps d'armée, while the German 20th Division, close by, practically afforded no co-operation at all. Had the French evinced any enterprise, they must have gained a tactical victory—which is what they wanted—and driven the Germans from the field of battle, which is what the Germans did not want. It was a case where great generalship was required on the German side, but where none was shown.

Frequently, too, portions of a long line of battle are deliberately intended for a purely passive defence, in order to serve as pivots on which to manœuvre. When a country

like Holland resorts to inundations, the defence must necessarily be passive. Speaking of the defence generally, Napoleon said: "He who remains behind his intrenchments is beaten." *

A river is an obstacle, more or less formidable, screening the movements of the opposing armies, and offering an advantage to that side which can utilize it to protect and screen a concentration of troops at some important spot. The successful defence of a river line can never be entirely passive. Formidable as a river may be as an obstacle, history shows that armies have seldom been prevented from crossing one when they have really wanted to do so, and that, too, in the face of strong yet, so to speak, passive opposition. Napoleon's passage of the Po in 1796; Wellington's of the Douro in 1809; Napoleon's passage of the Danube in 1809, before the battle of Essling, and again before the battle of Wagram in the presence of 120,000 men provided with 400 guns; Marmont's passage of the Douro in 1812; Napoleon's passage of the Beresina in 1812; Wellington's passage of the Adour in 1814, described by Napier as "a stupendous undertaking which must always rank among the prodigies of war;" the passage of the Ticino in 1859 by Napoleon III.; the passage of the Rappahannock by the Federals in 1863; and the crossing of the Danube in 1877 by the Russians, are a few of the many examples. The Rhine, too, in all ages has been crossed and re-crossed by great armies, as if it were no obstacle at all. But if these successful passages be examined, it will be found in all of them that either the defence of the river-line has been purely passive, or that the defenders have been cleverly out-manœuvred and deceived as to the real point of crossing. Frederick considered that there was nothing more difficult than to defend a long line of river. †

* "Napoléon Intime," p 46.

† "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xx.

Napoleon, when he fell back into France after the campaign of 1813, in Germany, turned the Rhine to good account. He did not attempt to defend it, but he made a demonstration as if to do so, and in this way induced the allies to await reinforcements and to delay the crossing for six weeks. This delay was of great value to Napoleon, who had arranged to concentrate his corps on the Upper Moselle.

But when the defence has been skilfully conducted, as by the Confederates at Bull Run, or at the Rappahannock in 1862, then it has been also, almost invariably, a successful defence: and from the nature of the case, the repulse of the assailants has generally been crushing. In the first example, the Confederates' success might have been far more decisive, if the pursuit had been more vigorous. At the Rappahannock, commonly called the battle of Fredericksburg, had Lee been as prompt with a vigorous counter-stroke as, under singularly parallel conditions, Hannibal was at the Trebbia, the whole issue of the campaign might have been changed, but in certain respects the position did not offer quite the same facilities for a strong counter-attack.

At the Trebbia, at Essling, at Wagram, at Orthes, at Fredericksburg, and at Woerth the enemy was allowed to cross the river. In the first instance, Hannibal drove the Roman army back on the obstacle. At Essling and at Fredericksburg the attacks were repulsed, but the baffled troops recrossed in good order; at Orthes, Wellington crossed, maintained his ground, and won the battle; and the same thing happened at Woerth.* At Friedland, the Russians deliberately selected a position with a deep river immediately in rear, and paid the penalty when defeated.

In the Napoleonic wars, the short range of grape-shot made the passage of a wide river a far more difficult operation than

* Here the river was only twenty feet wide and six feet deep.

it is with long-ranging shrapnel. "When the enemy's army is covered by a river," says Napoleon, "on which he has several bridge-heads, we must not approach him from the front—this arrangement disseminates your army and exposes you to the risk of being cut off. It is necessary that the river we wish to pass should be approached by columns in échelon; in such a way that there may be only one column, the most advanced, that the enemy can attack without himself exposing his flank. During this time, the light troops will line the bank; and when we have decided on the point where we wish to cross the river, we should move there rapidly and throw the bridge across. We must, however, observe that the point of passage must always be distant from the leading échelon, in order that the enemy may be deceived. From the moment that we are master of a position that commands the opposite bank, we secure many facilities for effecting the passage of a river, especially if this position is sufficiently extensive to place on it a strong force of artillery. *

The way to defend a line of river is not by distributing one's forces all along the bank, but by observing it while the troops are disposed so as readily to move in force to the attack of the enemy before he has completed the passage, and while he is still in want of space in which to deploy. The Archduke Charles, at Wagram, did not follow his own good example at Essling, but wrongly refrained from attack until Napoleon had crossed and acquired all the space he required for his order of battle.

A mountain range, like a river, may afford a good natural obstacle, but there is this great difference that if the position is taken up in the mountains, and not in rear of them, lateral communication is difficult if not impossible, and supervision and concerted action is often impracticable. If the mountains

* "Maximes de Guerre," xxxvi.

themselves are defended, all the passes should be occupied by detachments, and a strong reserve held in hand behind the mountains to attack at once any column that may force its way through, and before it has completed its deployment. The enemy can always concentrate in such force against a single avenue so as to gain a local success. Should he penetrate by more than one avenue, the principal column should be attacked, and if beaten the other columns will probably have to retire. Or, the mountains may be merely held by corps of observation while the main defence is made in rear, and conducted on the same principles as in the case of a river. In mountain warfare it is difficult to exercise command, consequently much depends upon the knowledge of war and the aptitude of subordinate officers, who must act on their own initiative.

For an active defence, a position must be so favourable that the defenders can hold it with a reasonable proportion of their troops, in order that a strong reserve may be kept in hand for offensive action. It is not generally advisable, or even possible, for the troops lining a position themselves to make a counter-attack. The British troops did do so at Waterloo, but not until the battle was at an end, and the Prussians, pressing in on the flanks and rear, had sealed the fate of the French army. If a counter-attack is contemplated the ground must be suitable. In 1741 Frederick was as yet inexperienced, and blames himself for taking up a position at Grotkau where his left and centre, being placed behind some marshes, were unable to act. He also attributes Villeroi's defeat at Ramilies to having placed his left wing so that it could not support his right.*

The defenders not having the initiative, their wisest course is to keep in reserve as many men as possible till the enemy has shown his hand. The moves of the attack must be

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxii.

met by counter-moves, and if the opportunity offers, a prompt and vigorous offensive may win the day; but experience has proved that the change from the defensive to the offensive involves careful arrangement, great skill, and much discipline, and is very difficult to execute. Napoleon called it "one of the most delicate operations of war." * The best example in history occurred in 1796 in Italy, when Napoleon took command of the French troops who were in the depths of misery on the mountains, on the defensive; he raised their *moral* to such a degree that he was enabled to change to the offensive, and conduct one of the most brilliant campaigns on record.

It is impossible to determine beforehand the "when," the "where," or the "how" of a counter-attack. The "when" and the "where" are determined by the time and direction of the enemy's attack. The "how" must be such that the opportune moment be not lost, as it may be if the distances between lines are great, or if much time is spent in parading the troops who are to make the forward movement. As a rule, the counter-stroke misses out all the preliminary stages of the attack, and dashes straight into the final phase, either from the front or from the flank, before, during, or after the assault on the position.

The fact that a position is often too strong to be attacked directly, will render it probable that attempts will be made to turn it; and these the defenders must be prepared to meet, because the enemy may disregard any strategical risk which may be involved, in order to increase the chances of a tactical success.

Supports and reserves, and second and third lines, are as necessary in the defence of an extensive position as in the attack on it; but in the former case, the supports and local

* "Maximes de Guerre."

reserves of the first line may be brought up much closer to the fighting line. Local reserves should be just strong enough to check at once any temporary success of the enemy; the second line provides for the safety of the flanks, and furnishes reserves where required; while the third line, or special reserve, is held in hand, under the commander's own orders for a special effort in any required direction, or for any great counter-attack outside the fighting line.

If ground is held in advance of the main position, every precaution should be taken to withdraw from it opportunely, and in good order. All the plans of a general might be frustrated by the advanced troops getting so seriously engaged as to necessitate the intervention of the main body to save them; and the battle might be brought on in advance of what has been deliberately selected as the most suitable position in the vicinity. On the other hand, the advanced troops, bearing in mind the desirability of compelling a distant deployment by the enemy, should make free use of long-range fire, and not lightly abandon their posts.

Whether in attack or defence, if a commander knows from the first where his chief effort will be required, his dispositions are simpler to make than where he has to await the development of the battle. As regards the defence, the direction of the enemy's main attack or attacks can often be foreseen; for it may be assumed that he will generally choose, or be obliged to choose, the approaches that afford the best cover, and present the fewest physical obstacles; and his artillery positions—an important factor in the attack—are often limited. However, the enemy may have neither time nor opportunity to make an accurate reconnaissance of the position; or he may neglect to make it, as Von Kamecke did at Spicheren; or he may err in judgment, as Steinmetz did in pressing a direct attack on the French left at Gravelotte; therefore, it is never

quite certain that he will attack from the direction anticipated. The most probable course open to the enemy should naturally receive most attention, and we need not believe in the most improbable until fully satisfied that the enemy has chosen that course; but to ignore the most unlikely course has led many generals into false moves, as happened to Napoleon at Jena and at Ligny; and to Moltke during the operations that ended in the twin battle of Gravelotte.—St. Privat when his plan was not based on the improbable assumption that Bazaine was not attempting to withdraw from Metz.

An experienced commander, in launching an attack, will consider not merely which is the most vulnerable point to strike, but also which is the most important, and which will, if captured, lead to the most decisive result. Thus the defenders must be prepared for any event; and, therefore, the more they are kept in hand at first, the less likely they are to be compromised by false attacks. At Leuthen, the Austrians deployed nearly the whole of their army; and being deceived by Frederick's false attack, they were decisively beaten. At the same time, in the defence of an extensive position, it would almost always be unwise to mass the general reserve in one place, as was done by the French at Blenheim, and again at Gravelotte, and by the Austrians at Königgrätz; because, should its action be required at a distant point, it may be unable to get there in time.

The defenders guard their flanks by resting them on natural obstacles or on works, and by the judicious arrangement of échelons and reserves. It is dangerous, however, to consider any natural obstacle as impassable, and therefore to leave it unguarded; but it is a mistake that has been made over and over again, and has often cost dear to those making it. Frederick the Great states that Villars was beaten at Malplaquet because he believed that the marsh on his right was

impassable; but the enemy crossed and took him in flank.* At Quebec the French were expecting attack, but Wolfe landed at a point considered impregnable, and therefore not properly defended.

At the battle of Fredericksburg, a wood on the right of Lee's line was left intact and unoccupied by the Confederates, because "the ground was so marshy within its recesses, and the undergrowth so dense and tangled, that it was judged impenetrable." † Yet this wood was penetrated by the Federals, and its capture nearly led to a disaster at an important crisis of the fight. Similarly, at the battle of Spicheren, the heights of the Rotherberg, considered inaccessible to a frontal attack, were scaled by the Germans unopposed; and the surprise that ensued was complete and fatal to the French.

The student of war naturally wishes for some guide to the number of men sufficient for the effective defence of any given position, or—to put it the other way—some estimate of the extent of ground which a given force can reasonably be expected to defend. But it is not possible to lay down fixed rules, because everything depends upon the peculiar circumstances of each particular case, upon the character of the ground itself, upon the number and quality of the troops on both sides, upon the manner in which the defenders are distributed, and upon the necessities of the situation, and so forth. Consequently, the general must, after all, fall back upon his knowledge of the art of war, and act upon sound principles applied to furthering some general guiding idea.

Under ordinary circumstances, it is perhaps safe to say that, for a purely passive defence, those parts of the position which require, in the first instance, more than three men to the yard are decidedly weak. But when an active defence is in question,

* "Instructions pour ses généraux," Art. viii.

† "Fredericksburg," by Henderson, p. 62.

then the proportion of men to the whole front occupied must be much greater than this, in order that there may be sufficient troops in reserve for an effective counter-stroke; for, unless the defenders can make a superior concentration for such an effort, they must necessarily restrict themselves to a more or less passive defence throughout, keeping their reserve in hand to support the threatened parts of the position.

The following examples give some idea of the proportion of troops to space.

Wellington's line of battle was three miles long at Waterloo, defended by 50,000 infantry, 12,400 cavalry, and 156 guns. This gives more than 20,000 men to the mile.

At Fredericksburg — where the position was covered by a river—"the entire length of Lee's line was about 11,500 yards, and his combatant strength probably about 68,000; the proportion of men to space was 11,000 to the mile, nearly six men to the yard." * Lee had not so many guns as the Federals, and of these nearly 100 were kept in reserve throughout the day. The Federals had available about 104,000 men and 302 guns, and were repulsed.*

At Spicheren, Frossard defended about 5000 yards of front with about 25,000 men and 90 guns, which gives about 8500 men to the mile, or 5 men to the yard. The Germans attacked this position "from one to three o'clock, struggling unsupported on a wide-extended front—11,000 infantry against 25,000. And, whilst Von Kamecke's slender line was bending round the flanks of the enemy's position, and—dashing again and again at his heavier masses—staved off defeat by the vigour of its attack, we know that within 15 miles of Spicheren stood 40,000 French and 36,000 Prussians. Had the whole of these assembled on the field, the French would have outnumbered the Prussians by 18,000 men. Between three and

* Henderson's "Fredericksburg," pp. 36, 66, 69, 131.

six o'clock, 14,000 Prussian infantry reached Saarbrucken, well-nigh equalizing the numbers of the opposing forces, and rescuing the 14th Division from imminent defeat. On the other hand, except Juniac's Dragoon Brigade, Frossard had received no reinforcements whatever. But even at six o'clock the French were not inferior in strength." *

At Woerth, McMahon defended unsuccessfully 4½ miles of front with about 36,000 infantry, 5500 cavalry, 102 guns, and 30 mitrailleuses, which gives about 9000 men to the mile. The Germans attacked with less than three times this strength. "The defence by a single brigade of the slopes in front of Froschwiller against the attack of a whole corps, until success elsewhere rendered that part of the position untenable, shows that local defence has gained enormously under present conditions, and that such an extension, or even one more considerable, is justified in the case of advantageous ground." †

As a general rule, one man per pace is sufficient for the shooting line, with supports numbering about one-half of the shooting line, and reserves about equal in strength to the troops in front, and belonging to the same battalions. This gives, for European warfare, three men to the pace for purely local defence; and is exclusive of the second line and the general reserve (referred to in the "Infantry Drill" as the "third line"). A general reserve must always be provided, but in small affairs the second line is dispensed with.

The duties of the second line are to fill up gaps in the first line and support it, and if necessary to prolong it; and "besides providing for the safety of the flanks, the second line will furnish reserves when required. Their position cannot always be definitely settled until the direction of the enemy's main attack has been indicated; hence the arrangements

* Henderson's "Spicheren," p. 243. † Hamley.

must be such as to meet all possible contingencies." * "Troops not required for the flanks should be assembled at one or more points from which prompt aid can be sent to support the more exposed positions of the first line, or from which counter-attacks may be readily undertaken." *

"The third line will be kept in hand to deliver a counter-attack, take up a pursuit, or cover a retreat." * "The third line should be so placed as to be able to assume the offensive with the greatest possible effect after the attack has been fully developed." * This third line must be reserved for very special purposes, and for unforeseen contingencies, and must not encroach upon the rôle of the second line, whose counter-attacks should be local.

"As a rough estimate, it may be assumed that a fairly strong position, partly intrenched, would require, including all arms and troops in reserve, about five men per pace." * But, of course, every case will be different in its conditions; and it may happen that a smaller proportion of men can hold a position successfully, or that a larger proportion cannot do so. Against natives or savages, the proportion of five men to a pace would never be necessary. When British troops, opposed to Asiatics, have been thrown on the defensive, an examination of the circumstances shows that prestige of race, combined with superior arms and discipline, has always compensated for a very marked inferiority in numbers.

In 1857, the garrison in the Residency of Lucknow was at one time 979 Europeans and Natives, and held its own against a rebel force numbering anything from 20,000 to 40,000 Sepoys. The extent of the defences was then about 2100 yards, which gave one man to about 6¼ feet; but at the commencement of the siege there was a garrison of about 1462, which gave one man to 4¼ feet. After the relief by

* "Infantry Drill."

Outram and Havelock, the numbers were raised to about 2700, Europeans and Natives, defending a perimeter of 3400 yards. This gave one man to about 3¾ feet; and it must be remembered that the mining operations by the garrison were considerable, some 150 feet of shafts and 2800 feet of galleries being excavated.

In considering this question of proportion of men to perimeter occupied, it may be useful to note that in the case of lines of investment, such as those drawn round Paris and Metz in 1870–71, for every 100 yards that the besiegers can reduce the radius of their investing lines, they diminish their perimeter by some 600 yards: obviously, therefore, the besieged should do all in their power to repel the investment; and, though unable to make flank attacks, they move on interior lines, and are assisted by heavy guns firing from advantageous positions.

Wellington fought many defensive battles and won many victories; but his counterstrokes never actually overwhelmed the enemy, and were not comparable in character and completeness to the strokes dealt in attack by Napoleon. When the Emperor launched his reserves in the crisis of the fight, the effect was of a "roaring flood" pouring onwards, covering all, and sweeping everything before it. At Vittoria, Wellington attacked and won his most complete victory; but "the French," says Napier, "escaped with comparatively little loss of men." Hannibal at the Trebbia, and at Cannæ; Moore at Corunna; the Archduke Charles at Aspern (Essling); Wellington at Waterloo; and Lee at Fredericksburg are all good instances of successful defensive tactics, and although the Archduke did not win the battle of Wagram, his determined counter-stroke might have been even more effective than Wellington's at Waterloo, if his brother had, like Blucher, pressed down on the right flank of the French.

Frederick's victory at Rossbach is a peculiar example of a defensive battle. The king, acting on interior lines, made skilful manœuvres, and his cavalry counter-attack led by Seidlitz was actually delivered before the French attack had developed. This battle affords an excellent example of the successful co-operation of the three arms; and the skill of the king in attacking at a time and place where a counter-attack was not expected.

Spicheren is a good example of a defensive battle that raged for many hours with no decided result, because the counter-attacks of the French were local and without connection; and with the exception of the one made from the left, by Bataille and Vergé, they did not extend outside the position. It is easy to follow on the maps Colonel Henderson's detailed account of this battle, and to see what should have been done; but it was not so easy for Frossard (not that we can acquit him of blame)—especially from the position he occupied—to realize what was taking place along such an extensive front, broken as it was, and covered with forests. But if there ever was a defensive battle where a great counter-attack should and could have been made, it was Spicheren. Not once, but over and over again, Fortune offered the palm of victory to the French. When at nightfall a stronger offensive movement was made by Bataille and Vergé, victory was actually declaring itself for them, but Frossard, fearing for his flank and rear, withheld the victorious troops; and again the opportunity was lost. And so it always happens, that if a general directing the defence allows his mind to be oppressed by uncertainty and anxiety regarding the intentions of the enemy, and distrusts himself, he does everything in a half-hearted manner.

In conclusion, although it may be accepted as a rule that to act on the defensive is generally a losing game, and a sign of

weakness, yet it does not by any means follow that a battle fought on the defensive is a battle lost. Our own record in the Peninsula is a sufficiently striking refutation of any such idea. There may be many reasons for preferring to accept battle in a defensive position. They may be reasons of necessity, or expediency, as Wellington's undoubtedly were in his earlier campaigns in Portugal, and in his crowning victory at Waterloo; or they may be deep-laid reasons, implying no admission of inferiority, as Hannibal's were at the Trebbia.

No doubt the defenders have often supposed that their positions were impregnable, but how often they have deceived themselves! Orthes, Spicheren, Woerth, and Gravelotte-St. Privat are but a few out of many instances. Yet, with skilful dispositions and steady troops, defensive battles may end, and repeatedly have ended in great victories for the defending side. Hence, though we might go so far as to say that *a deliberate defensive is generally right only when all the conditions are so unfavourable that practically there is no alternative*, yet it is evident that there can be no rigid rule; and from the instances quoted—and many others might be cited—it is clear that, notwithstanding the moral elevation and sense of superiority pertaining to the attack, a good defensive has always a fair chance of success.*

* See p. 289.

THE SELECTION OF A POSITION, AND CONSIDERATIONS IN ITS DEFENCE.

"In war, in every movement, our aim must be to secure a good position." *

It is not always possible to select a position for defence. A commander may be forced to fight on ground not of his own choosing, as, for example, Cromwell at Dunbar; the Prussians at Auerstädt; the Austrians at Marengo; the British at Salamanca; and the French at Vittoria, and again at Sedan, and there are scores of similar instances. But when a choice can be made, then it must be borne in mind that a position, to be a good one, must be strong strategically as well as tactically: in other words, it must cover the base and the communications; otherwise, the enemy may march round it and turn it without fighting. And, if there are no facilities for retreating, a successful attack may produce an overwhelming disaster. Hence the disasters at Marengo, at Auerstädt, at Vittoria, at Leipsic, and at Sedan; and it was victory alone that saved Cromwell at Dunbar, and Wellington at Salamanca.

If the object is merely to hold on for a certain time, and the circumstances are such that an offensive movement is not intended at all, it is advantageous to be covered by some

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 49.

natural obstacle; but, where the intention is to make an active defence, the ground in front must be favourable for the purpose, and free from obstacles, at least in those directions in which counter-strokes are contemplated. The right of the Austrian position at Prague, for example, offered no facilities for a counter-stroke when Frederick, before attacking, committed himself to a flank march within striking distance of the Austrian right wing; but an enterprising general would have disconcerted the Prussians by a vigorous counter-attack from the left or from the centre. On the other hand, it is an advantage to the defenders if, in front of the position selected, there exists an obstacle such as a river, lake, or marsh, which will break the formations of the assailants, prevent cohesion, and dislocate the attack, without impeding the lateral communications within the position. The defenders did not avail themselves of this advantage at Blenheim or at Prague; but then, what can be expected from generals who appear to be spell-bound by the movements of the enemy when the time for the counter-attack has arrived?

If the flanks of a position rest on impassable obstacles, the power to manœuvre is much restricted. For an active defence, therefore, strong natural features on the flanks, or fortified villages are preferable to impediments like rivers or cliffs. The danger, in any case, of relying too implicitly on the impassability or impregnability of a natural obstacle has been pointed out in the preceding chapter.

No position can be very strong if faced by favourable sites on which the opposing artillery can be massed, and from which it can effectively prepare the way for the infantry attack: and it is of first importance that the ground in front of the position should be completely under the view and fire of the defenders. Steep ground in front is not always an advantage, and may be a danger. It prevents ricochets, but also is apt

to give cover to the assailants at a critical stage of the attack; the defenders, moreover, cannot fire without exposing themselves to view, and the enemy's guns can play on them up to the moment of assault. The positions on the Rotherberg at Spicheren and on the hill at Majuba are good examples of such a faulty arrangement.

A defensive position may be convex towards the enemy; or concave; or practically straight; or with one or both flanks partly thrown back. If the position is convex, one or both sides of it may be raked by long-ranging artillery: * or the enemy may attack one side only, and if successful, the retreat of the wing not directly attacked will be compromised; as happened at Prague in 1757. Or the assailants may choose the angle for their attack, and in this case, whatever the defenders may do, their situation is very unfavourable. In short, so many are the obvious objections to a convex defensive position, that the cases must be rare in which it would be justifiable to select it. Where the progress of a fight has forced such a position on the defenders, as at Prague and Leuthen, the result has invariably been disastrous to them. In covering the passage of the Danube at the battle of Essling, Napoleon's order of battle was necessarily convex, and the situation was very critical. Again, the same thing occurred on the second and third days of the battle of Leipsic; on this occasion Napoleon's reverse was the natural consequence.

On the other hand, a position concave towards the enemy may, under certain conditions, be a very formidable one. It is essential, however, that the flanks should be particularly strong, for they are peculiarly liable to attack. But if the enemy can be induced to disregard the flanks and strike at the centre, and

* Applies in some degree to a concave position, but the sides produced to the front diverge, whereas in a convex position they converge.

give the wings an opportunity of enveloping him, as actually occurred at Cannæ, then the strength of the concave position becomes at once apparent. At Waterloo very much the same thing happened, for the arrival of the Prussians made the allied position, considered as a whole, a concave one with reference to the French; and, while the latter were engaged in desperate but fruitless efforts against the centre, they were enveloped and destroyed by the wings. Even taking the British position before the arrival of the Prussians, it was rendered slightly concave by the occupation of Hougomont in advance of the right flank; and it should be noted how greatly this advanced post protected the outer flank of the troops that made the final counter-stroke on the Imperial Guards. The Austrian order of battle at Essling was concave. Frossard's position at Spicheren was not concave towards the enemy, but it could, and should, have been made so by the occupation of the Stiring Copse. That this copse was not strongly held must always remain a serious reflection upon the military judgment of the French commander.

Very prominent salients in a defensive position, unless detached from the main line of defence, should be avoided; because the enemy is generally obliged to attack them, and often with every chance of success, and thus he establishes a strong lodgment from which to direct his further movements. Mont Avron is an advanced salient on the east of Paris that the fire of the German artillery obliged the French to evacuate. Sometimes, however, a very pronounced salient may be found which commands the front and flanks of the position in a marked degree, but at the same time is so commanded itself by artillery positions from the rear that, even if taken by the enemy, it could not be retained. Such a salient should undoubtedly be strongly occupied, and must add greatly to the strength of the position. Defensible posts in advance of a

position may add greatly to its strength, but they must not be too far distant from the main line of defence, as was the hill of Solferino; and even when within supporting distance, they must be easily accessible from the rear, which La Haye Sainte at Waterloo, captured by the French, was not, but might have been.

The Bois des Génivaux was in advance of the left-centre at Gravelotte, and the French acted rightly in defending the western border, because it necessitated an early deployment and threw the Germans into disorder before commencing their advance against the main-position in rear. Under such circumstances, the defenders of the advanced position should withdraw clear of the position in rear so as not to mask its fire.

Before, however, settling the details of the occupation of any position, the object, and hence the character, of the defence must be well considered. For instance, is the impending action merely intended to retard the enemy for a while, as was Ziethen's during the retrograde movement from Charleroi to Fleurus and Ligny in 1815; or is it to be fought out to a decisive issue, the position taken up being held at all costs, as at Waterloo? In the one case, a resistance *à outrance* is not contemplated; in the other it is; and all the details of the occupation, the posting of the troops, and the use of obstacles and intrenchments will depend accordingly.

Having then taken a broad view of the situation, and determined clearly what is the precise object to be gained by fighting, and that the nature and extent of the ground is suitable for the force available, the details of the defence may be dealt with, and with advantage perhaps in the following order:—

(*a*) The tactical relation between the ground and the troops should be considered, keeping in view that the infantry must play the principal part; but, unless there are good sites for the

batteries to fire on the approaches the position is seriously defective.

(*b*) The decisive points which must be defended at all costs should be noted. If the enemy should capture one of these points, he must be driven out again, or the battle is lost.

(*c*) The different courses open to the enemy should be studied, and a plan of action to meet each case should be thought out; noting for occupation any places from which an effective flanking fire could be directed on the approaches.

(*d*) The weak points of the position should receive careful consideration. These will be the flanks and those parts from which the fire on the assailants would not be effective. It is here that the enemy will probably direct his attacks.

(*e*) It is a good plan to review the situation generally, and consider in detail the advantages and the disadvantages of the position, and of the proposed disposition of the troops; in this way we are led to regard everything from the enemy's point of view as well as from our own.

(*f*) Finally, what steps can be taken to strengthen the position by means of field-fortification? The lateral communications should be improved and new ones opened up, and be under cover; and the lines of retreat should not be neglected.

The effect of a possible change in the weather should never be overlooked. The formidable rear-guard position of the evening may be deprived of its strength by the morning mist. Again, a fog, mist, heavy rain, or snow, may strengthen an otherwise indifferent position by blotting out, so to speak, the artillery positions from which the assailants proposed to overwhelm the batteries of the defence and prepare the way for the assaulting infantry. The weather may make the co-operation of artillery impossible, except within effective infantry range.

The intrenchment of a defensive position may be taken to

mean primarily, shelter-trenches for infantry, and epaulments for guns. In special cases, formidable field redoubts may be constructed; but the disadvantage of them is that they are not always defensible, as a fortified village is, at every stage of their progress. For example, many of the great redoubts round Paris, constructed after the outbreak of war, had to be abandoned; but if they had been held until completion, the Germans could hardly have captured them except by advancing regular siege works against them, as at Belfort, which could not have been done till the siege guns arrived, long after the investment was completed; and meanwhile, these advanced positions could have covered the deployment of the besieged armies and enabled the Parisians to have made sorties under far more favourable conditions.

The firing line of the defence must be regarded as the real line of resistance. Every movement should be a forward one in support of it. There should be no falling back fighting except in the case of outposts, skirmishers, rear-guards, and of course when it is not proposed to resist beyond a certain point, as when containing or retarding forces are employed. For, if the first position, upon which much labour has been expended, cannot be held, then there will be small chance of holding a second, and presumably a less favourable one, in rear of it. But, as has been stated more than once, there can be no rigid rules in war; and at Spicheren, there actually existed a second position, perhaps even stronger than the first position; but it was not desirable to make it the first line, and abandon the ground in front to the enemy. A rear-guard position should, however, always be noted, to meet the contingency of a reverse; but for moral considerations it may not be advisable to put it at once in a state of defence, because any preparations for a possible defeat should be concealed from the troops that are to fight for victory. It is most

inadvisable to give troops the idea that a stronger line exists in rear; and unless an independent tactical unit can be spared to hold them, second lines, or "keeps," are likely to be illusory advantages, tending to weaken the defence of the first line.

When the action contemplated is only partly defensive, that portion of the line which is to maintain a passive defence should be very strongly posted and intrenched, in order that there may be no chance of its being overwhelmed while offensive operations are being carried out in some other part of the field. When the defensive pivot happens to be a fortress, the defending force will have much more freedom of action; and fortresses should be regarded by field armies as pivots, and not as places of refuge. The misuse of Metz in 1870 is the best example that can be given.

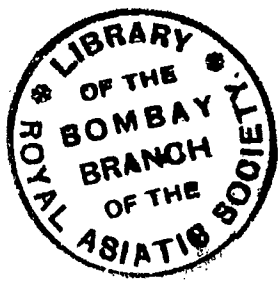
Large woods are dangerous in front or on the flanks of a position, as they cover the movements of the attack. This happened at Spicheren. But, on the other hand, the great forests, with their thick undergrowth, threw the Germans into great disorder; many men profited by the opportunities so afforded of remaining behind, several columns lost their way, and throughout there was no cohesion in the attack. The narrow thick woods in the Mance valley that ran parallel and close to the French left at Gravelotte were a great obstacle to Steinmetz, who did not cut paths through them, and they were the principal cause of the tactical errors he committed, and which caused the blood of four thousand men to flow in vain. In defence of a wood, it is of vital importance to keep the enemy outside; it is easier to do so than to drive him back when once he has gained a footing.

A position should be divided into sections, each section being placed under the commander of a distinct tactical unit; and it is of great importance that the principal approaches

should not form the lines of demarcation between commanders of sections, because there should be no divided responsibility at points where the enemy is likely to strike.

Finally, "there are many ways of occupying a given position with the same army; the military *coup d'œil*, experience, and genius of the general-in-chief decide it—it is his principal business."*

* "Pensées de Napoléon," 9.



THE EFFECT OF MODERN FIRE-ARMS.

It is a strange fact that whenever an improvement has been made in fire-arms, many have jumped at once to the conclusion that the defence would thereby gain more than the attack. This conclusion has been far from correct.* Certainly the rapidity with which modern rifles can be loaded and fired, combined with their constantly increasing range and accuracy, enables infantry, well posted and with a clear field of view, to withstand for a while the direct attack of very superior numbers, provided their fire is well directed, ammunition does not fail, and that they are not crushed by an overwhelming artillery fire. For the same reasons, it is now not only possible, but expedient, to place the defenders in single rank in the firing line, where formerly a line not less than two-deep was absolutely necessary; and the men thus saved from the first line can be held in reserve. But the increased power of modern fire-arms benefits the attacking side as well, by enabling fewer men to secure a defensive pivot on which to manœuvre with increased freedom. Therefore, on the one hand, if the defenders can now increase the extent of their front, and at the same time hold more men in reserve than formerly; on the other hand, the assailants can count upon a larger proportion of their troops as available for turning movements. And here we see what is really the most pronounced effect of modern fire-arms. By their long range and rapid and

* See Napoleon's views on this subject at p. 153.

deadly fire, they have compelled the assailants to attack on a far more widely extended front than formerly, and they have given a great development to flank attacks, for they have rendered frontal attacks impossible, or exceedingly hazardous, unless the ground or thick weather favours such an order of battle. The balance of power, then, between the attack and the defence appears hardly to be disturbed, and certainly not to the detriment of the attack on an ordinary field of battle. But there are exceptional cases where the defence has gained; for example, it is probable that the Germans could not have held the French in Metz or in Paris in the days of the musket. These were peculiar cases where both sides considered it necessary to act on the defensive.

Recent campaigns have shown that the effect of modern fire-arms has been to increase the resisting power of rough-and-ready defences against frontal attack, and that villages prepared for defence are still capable of considerable resistance. But the efficacy of all field defences depends upon their complete subordination to tactical requirements.*

One almost certain effect of modern fire-arms is that night operations will be more frequent than in the past. (See pages 189, 193, and 332.)

Advanced and rear guards are less likely now than formerly to be overwhelmed by the sudden onslaught of a superior force; and if the columns of an army are spread over a great lateral extent of country, there is less danger of their defeat in detail, because one column may now by itself bear the brunt of an attack for a sufficient time to allow for the march of reinforcements, or for an orderly retreat under cover of a rear-guard. The artillery is placed well to the front in the order of march, being sufficiently protected by a small force of infantry.

* Paraphrased from lecture by Sir G. Clarke.

The fire of modern fire-arms restricts the action of cavalry on the field of battle; but when the long lines of infantry become exhausted, demoralized and disorganized, and anxiously absorbed by what is passing in their own immediate front, or when ammunition fails,* then will be the time to charge them in flank, possibly even in front, and with as great effect as in former times; and such opportunities for the action of cavalry in masses will undoubtedly occur; but it cannot be denied that smokeless powder and magazine rifles are to the disadvantage of cavalry, though the small bullets will not so easily stop the horses in an actual charge.

The increased range of modern fire-arms has greatly widened the neutral belt which separates armies previous to collision. At Waterloo, the French and English armies bivouacked, on the night of the 17th of June, within less than a mile of each other. The range of modern fire-arms would render such an arrangement impossible in these days; and to attempt such flank marches as Marmont's at Salamanca, or such close turning movements as Frederick practised at the battle of Prague, would now be utterly impracticable. Where wide turning movements are undertaken, there may be an advantage for the defensive, owing to the difficulty of keeping up connection, telegraphs notwithstanding, between the turning force and the portion of the army left in observation in front. Another effect of the great distance which now must separate the combatants is, that it will be much more difficult to reconnoitre and to ascertain the dispositions contemplated for attack or defence.

The long range of modern fire-arms offers to that side which can the better avail itself of it—usually the attacking side—the great advantage of being able to concentrate its fire on

* More rounds are carried than formerly, but there will be a longer time and more opportunities for firing them.

certain spots from a great lateral extent of front. Whichever side is forced to retire under the effective fire of modern fire-arms must suffer very heavy losses.

In the days of "Brown Bess," fire was opened at ranges so short that it was difficult to miss, and the heavy round ball inflicted a more severe wound than the little pellet of the magazine rifles. In these days, however, troops are far longer exposed to fire; the strain on the nerves is of much longer duration; and when advancing to the attack the men cannot be kept so long in formations under control; there is great dissolution of tactical units and much mixing up, consequently a higher training for junior officers and non-commissioned officers is essential; and it is far more difficult to exercise command. Admitting that there will be very heavy losses in certain places, it is probable that the percentage of losses of the whole force engaged will not on either side be greater than, or even so great as, in times past; while a larger proportion of men will undoubtedly recover from their wounds. We have but to recall the heavy losses sustained at Marengo, at Eylau, at Albuera, at Borodino, and at many other actions fought about the same period, to see that this must be so.

The moral effect of modern fire-arms, especially shrapnel, may be terrible, but probably not much greater than was the moral and material effect of fire in Napoleon's time, when the infantry reserved their volleys for close ranges, with the deadliest effect; and the guns, closely supported by cavalry, fired at ranges little beyond those of the musket, and swept away entire companies by their discharges, or sent round shot ploughing through the close formations of the infantry.

To get the full effect with modern fire-arms, troops require thorough instruction in musketry; but it is discipline above all things that is indispensable; and in certain phases of a battle, when the tension on the nerves is strained to breaking-point,

it is an iron discipline only that will carry men through the struggle successfully. When the fire is heavy, mere target marksmen are of less account than brave men who can hit a hay-stack at medium ranges, for, to quote again from Suwarroff, "the weapon itself is nothing, the man behind it is everything."

The greater the distance, the greater the difficulty of estimating the range and observing the effect of fire, and, although the effect of shells may be nearly as great at long as at medium ranges, it is more difficult, even with telescopic sights, to lay the guns, and it is frequently impossible to distinguish friend from foe. Prince Kraft gives a graphic description of the great practical difficulties of finding the range in action, and as ranges have still further increased, we may expect still greater discrepancy between the results in war and those in peace. Prince Kraft wrote:—"You will, then, certainly not wonder that one makes mistakes, or that one may shoot and observe for a quarter of an hour, or even for a whole hour, without getting the range." *

"I certainly observed that when the effect of the enemy's shells became very severe,† the guns were very badly laid, and were even fired without being laid; and I had to take very strong measures in order to re-introduce a quiet and regular service of the guns. This is possible in the case of artillery, but in the case of infantry the aiming of the men, especially in a hot action, is almost entirely beyond control." ‡ "The results of target practice in peace may tempt us to trust in great fallacies. For, when fighting in earnest, matters take quite another form." ‡

* Kraft, "Artillery," p. 315. Range-finding has improved since Prince Kraft wrote.

† The effect of the modern shell is far more severe.

‡ Prince Kraft, "Infantry," Letter xi.

There are no practical data regarding the effects of smokeless powder. Many have expressed the opinion that the defenders will gain most by its adoption, but we have no means at present of testing this belief, and it may not improbably be found to be entirely wrong.* The effect of modern fire-arms makes it of great importance to screen from view, as much as possible, all defensive works and the dispositions of the defenders.

A great deal is written about the hopeless condition of infantry under the fire of modern shrapnel. But Lord Wolseley says: "I have laid great stress upon the fact that the effect of artillery fire is more moral than actual;" and, in another place, "It kills but few, but its appalling noise, the way it tears down trees, knocks houses into small pieces, and mutilates the human frame when it does hit, strikes terror into all but the stoutest hearts."† The moral effect has always been very great, and artillerymen have always predicted that in the next war its material effect would be equally great, but somehow these predictions have never, up to the present date, been realized, and the percentage of killed and wounded has been very small, though locally, when the circumstances are favourable to the artillery, the slaughter may be terrible. It is for the infantry to study artillery and not place themselves at a disadvantage. Although we have no war data, we may make deductions; and considering the nature of things and that the human heart remains unchanged, infantry need not feel depressed. On ordinary ground, it will probably be found that the improvement in artillery and in rifles will actually give the infantry a relative advantage, because the features of the ground, hedges, trees, and buildings, afford so much cover, that effective rifle fire now extends up to the limits of vision in most localities. This might not have been the

* See p. 153.

† "Soldier's Pocket-book."

case formerly on the same ground, because the infantry would have had to approach much closer before they could use their fire. Therefore, if the direction of attack be well chosen, there will often be no necessity to expose the infantry to artillery fire at distances much beyond the effective range of their own weapons. It may be necessary to manœuvre in order to secure favourable ground, and even to place the attack in a strategically critical situation to gain a tactical advantage; but the risk is justified, if we avoid the fire of artillery which is much beyond the range of the rifles in use.

Artillery officers who neglect to study the capabilities of infantry and consider their batteries safe, by reason of the startling effect of modern shrapnel, fired under peace-conditions at targets, will find their detachments shot down in a most unexpected manner and rendered unable to work their guns with the deliberation and coolness necessary for good shooting. On the other hand, infantry officers who are unaware of the power of artillery will place their men in situations where they will be simply slaughtered by shrapnel. It is important to note that rifle bullets that miss the batteries do not exercise that moral effect that every shell does, even when it bursts short or passes overhead.

With regard to the future, many people think that when aerial navigation has been mastered, war will be carried on almost exclusively by means of air-ships and high explosives, and that men, horses, and sea-going ships will be of small account; that the very principles of war will be all changed; and, finally, that that nation will be supreme which possesses the greatest number of war-machines. But this surmise is entirely unwarrantable—contrary to the nature of things and to the whole teaching of history. No nation will ever be able to defend itself by the exclusive means of mechanical contrivances, high explosives, poisonous gases, and so on; nor

be able to conquer another nation by such means alone. It is the inventors, and certain theorists who study the results of experiments under peace-conditions, who are always preaching that war must soon become impossible; and to the ordinary layman their arguments appear plausible enough. Science will doubtless continue to improve the instruments of destruction, and the sphere of operations will be extended, but the principles of war can never change, nor will valour ever be at a discount. It is fortunate for England, at the present time, that those men are powerless for harm who lately advocated the defence of our shores and of our empire by means of torpedo-boats, submarine mines, and permanent fortifications—men, horses, and fully-manned war-ships being regarded as hardly essential to success. The future will certainly not disprove the maxim, accepted by practical warriors of all ages, that it is the men of the nation—not the armaments or fortifications—that must be relied upon in war.

RETREATS AND REAR-GUARDS.

THE retreat of an army may be necessitated by strategic considerations, as was the British retreat to Corunna in 1809, and the retreat from Burgos and Madrid in 1812 (commenced within three months of the victory of Salamanca, and the occupation of Madrid); or, it may be the immediate consequence of a defeat, as was the Prussian retreat after Ligny, and the French retreat after Waterloo. But be the cause what it may, it is certain that there is no operation of war more trying to the *moral* and discipline of troops than retreat before a pursuing enemy. It has already been stated on the authority of Marshal Saxe that he who halts, when the other marches against him, is lost. What, then, must be the condition of him who not only halts, but actually retreats? It was a favourite maxim of Napoleon that "the first movement in retreat was the commencement of ruin." * "In Asia, when triumphs cease, difficulties commence." †

"No matter how skilfully a retreat may be conducted," says Napoleon, "it will weaken the *moral* of the army, since in losing the chances of success, one delivers them over to the enemy. Besides, retreats cost more men and material than the most bloody engagements; with this difference that, in a battle, the enemy loses nearly as many as you, whilst in a

* Alison, x. p. 283.

† Quoted by Skobeleff in "Scheme of Invasion of India."

retreat, you lose without his losing." * Napoleon, to his bitter cost, proved the soundness of this maxim when, instead of retreating from Moscow by the southern route through a country not yet exhausted of supplies, he recoiled before Kutusoff at Malo-Yaroslavetz after an indecisive battle, and retreated by the old line by which he had advanced.

"The opinion of Marshal Saxe is, that there are no fine retreats except those which are made before an enemy who pursues slackly; for if he pursues vigorously, the retreat will very soon be converted into a rout. It is then a great error, said the marshal, to follow the proverb that you shall make a golden bridge for the enemy, since you are sure to destroy him, if you charge him vigorously immediately that he is in retreat." † Frederick says that if obliged to retrograde, no matter what the reason, the troops become discouraged by it; and he adds, that at the battle of Molwitz he learnt how much time is required to restore confidence to a corps that has been disheartened. ‡

Pursuits are of different characters; but, if to the moral depression which must be entailed by a retreat, to the physical difficulties of the road, and to the loss and hardships consequent on stress of weather, be added the pressure of a vigorous pursuit by a determined enemy, then the demoralization attendant upon such a movement is apt to be increased tenfold, and it will require all the skill and courage of the commander, all the devotion of the officers, and all the sterling qualities of the best troops to preserve an unbroken front and a cheerful subordination to orders.

Even when the enemy's pursuit is not very vigorous, good troops are apt to go to pieces during a retreat. "It must be obvious to every officer," wrote Wellington in his memorable

* "Maximes de guerre," vi. † "Notes des Maximes."
‡ "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xxiv.

order, "that from the moment the troops commenced their retreat from the neighbourhood of Burgos on the one hand, and from Madrid on the other, the officers lost all command over their men. Irregularities and outrages of all descriptions were committed with impunity, and losses have been sustained which ought never to have been incurred. Yet the necessity for retreat existing, none was ever made on which the troops had such short marches; none on which they made such long and repeated halts; and none on which the retreating armies were so little pressed on their rear by the enemy."

Again, during the retreat to Corunna, though the army had sustained no defeat—had not even fought a battle—and when the pursuit was anything but vigorous, disorders of every kind prevailed. "Discipline, however," says Alison, "had already become seriously relaxed during the retreat, though only of three days' duration, from Sahagun; the spirit of the men had been surprisingly depressed by the thoughts of retiring before the enemy; and the officers had in a great degree lost their authority, and disorders equally fatal to the army and inhabitants had already commenced." *

It is evident, then, what a serious business a retreat is, even for an undefeated army, and under what may be called favourable circumstances: and it may well be asked, what are the chances of escaping disaster when a retreat is the immediate consequence of a battle lost? The answer to this is—1st, that the engagement must be broken off in good time; 2ndly, that the dispositions for withdrawal from the field must be skilfully made; and 3rdly, that a rear-guard of fresh troops must be interposed between the victors and the vanquished. Let but these three conditions be fulfilled; super-add to them the facts that the exhaustion after the struggle is as great on one side as the other; and that during

* Alison, viii. p. 25.

the darkness which has probably closed the fighting, little can be done towards organizing columns for pursuit; and it will be apparent that there is no reason why a defeated army should not draw off from the field of battle in fair order, and make good its retreat.*

To break off a lost engagement when the attack is vigorous and well directed, and when it may be presumed the assailants are well aware of the advantage they have gained, requires not merely the greatest judgment and skill in a commander, but also moral courage and resolution of the highest order. Jomini says, "When we think of the physical and moral condition of an army in full retreat after a lost battle, of the difficulty of preserving order, and of the disasters to which disorder may lead, it is not hard to understand why the most experienced generals have hesitated to attempt such an operation." Thus, from timidity as much as from boldness, a commander is often tempted to prolong an action imprudently, and to use up rashly, in desperate efforts to achieve success, troops which should be reserved to cover retreat and stave off disaster. Napoleon himself committed this fatal error at Waterloo,† where "he prolonged the battle uselessly until safe retreat was impossible."‡ Under such circumstances, the defeat is so decisive that there remains nothing possible, except to endeavour to rally the troops as soon as the enemy ceases to press, and to organize any reinforcement in rear for resistance where obstacles, natural or artificial, offer some advantage.

* See reference to Vittoria, p. 194.

† Was he thinking of Marengo, and hoping against hope that Grouchy would arrive in time to save him, as Desaix had done? He had a right to expect him. At Essling, in 1809, the situation was not nearly so critical as at Waterloo, and Napoleon, by a timely retreat to the island of Lobau, saved his army.

‡ Chesney, "Waterloo Lectures," p. 223.

It is worse than useless for a general to upbraid his troops, or to attempt to check the rout until a safe distance has been reached. The Germans rather commend McMahon for not attempting to rally his troops sooner after their defeat at Woerth; he, on the contrary, urged on the flight by ordering a second night march, possibly because he could not form a rear-guard. The rear-guard of fresh troops at the defiles of the Vosges, on the evening of the 6th of August, was swept away by the torrent of fugitives.

When it is evident that retreat is inevitable, the execution of it will require the most deliberate and skilful management. No rules for withdrawal can be laid down. It is only he whose finger is on the pulse of the fight who can say when, and in what order, the retirement should be made. The general principle of course must be observed, that the retrograde movement should be hidden from the enemy as long as possible, and this may often be effected by the delivery of a counter-attack, particularly by cavalry who, at this crisis, must be prepared to act with great boldness, regardless of risk to themselves. Artillery, too, should be utilized fearlessly, in order that under cover of their fire the infantry masses may be disentangled from the struggle, and withdrawn to positions safe from immediate attack, and afforded breathing time to rally and reorganize. The heroic resistance opposed to the victorious advance of the Prussians at Königgrätz by the Austrian artillery and cavalry, which alone enabled the wreck of their shattered infantry to make good their retreat, is an example well worthy of imitation.

When an army endeavours to cover its retreat by an offensive movement on a large scale, the attack should take place as late in the day as possible, because it is an attack that cannot be long sustained with success. Taking advantage of the confusion caused in the opposing ranks, and of the cover

of night, and camp fires kept up to deceive the enemy, an uninterrupted march may be secured. "During a retreat, the troops must always bivouac. The arrangements for blowing up bridges should be made by the main body, for if left to the rear-guard to do, there may not be time for it to do the work efficaciously. It does not follow that if the staff is good, the retreat of a beaten army will always be carried out successfully, but it is certain that it must quickly degenerate into a disorderly flight, unless the staff is of the first order." *

A retirement in échelon is generally preferable to a retirement by alternate corps. It offers more solid resistance and causes less disintegration of the line of battle, and can be carried out with less confusion. The more roads there are to retire by, the more easily will the withdrawal be effected. The communications should, of course, receive close attention before the action commences; and anything in the shape of a defile behind a beaten army renders the situation most critical. Frederick considered that the most difficult manœuvre was a retreat across a river in presence of the enemy. † The passage of the Beresina in 1812 is an example of the appalling disaster that may overtake an army when it is crowded back upon a defile. Leipsic in 1813 is another example; Napoleon fought with his back to the Elster, and with no retreat except by a single bridge, and one road across a morass that was a mile and a half wide. Again, when Soult had failed in his offensive operations in the Pyrenees in 1813, "the French were there wedged in a narrow road, between inaccessible rocks on the one side and the river on the other. While struggling through this dreadful pass, the head of the light division reached the summit of the precipice which overhung the road, and immediately began

* Wolseley. † "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. xv.

firing down on the dense throng. Indescribable confusion followed. The cavalry drew their swords and charged through the pass; the infantry were trampled underfoot; numbers, horses and all, were precipitated into the river; some in despair fired vertically up at the summit of the cliffs; the wounded implored quarter as they were rolled over the brink, and hung suspended, yet bleeding, on the branches of trees over the roaring torrent. So piteous was the scene, that many even of the iron veterans of the light division ceased to fire. With such circumstances of horror did the last columns of that mighty host leave Spain, who but a few days before had mounted the pass of Roncesvalles buoyant with spirit, and in all the pride of apparently irresistible strength." *

But, after all, the successful retirement of an army from a battle-field, and its withdrawal beyond the reach of immediate molestation by the enemy, depend chiefly upon the skill, courage, and resolution with which the rear-guard, which is thrust between it and the foe, is handled. The sole duty of a rear-guard is to check pursuit, and gain time to enable the general to rally his troops, and prepare, if he wants to, for the renewal of the battle in a fresh position. If the retreat of an army is the most difficult operation of war, then the handling of the rear-guard, which closes the retreat and renders it at all possible, is not the least difficult part of that operation. The commander must be a man of courage, fortitude, prudence, resolution, and resource. He must constantly bear in mind the essential difference between his position and that of the commander of an advanced guard. To the latter in difficulties, each hour that he prolongs the contest brings help nearer. To the former, in a similar predicament, the very hardihood that he may display in maintaining his ground may compromise

* Alison, x. p. 262.

not only his own safety, but also that of the army which he is safeguarding. It has been said that the commander of a rear-guard should possess courage and resolution, because "experience in every age has demonstrated that, after the protracted excitement of a great battle, the bravest soldiers become unstrung, and at such a moment the attack of a few fresh troops often produces the most extraordinary results." *

"The long and fearful excitement of battle once relaxed, leaves the toil-worn frame nerveless and exhausted, and the mind itself destitute of the energy requisite for any renewal of vigorous exertion. A bold onset made by a few resolute men on troops who have maintained, even successfully, a hard day's combat, is almost sure to turn the scale in favour of the new assailants." † If possible, therefore, the rear-guard of a defeated army should take the offensive on the night of the battle. The panic caused to Napoleon's veterans by the charge of a squadron of Hussars, on the night of the victory of Wagram, has already been alluded to; ‡ and after Borodino, an irruption of Cossacks into the French lines, during the night, caused such an alarm, that even the Imperial Guard had to turn out and stand to their arms. "A sufficiently annoying incident," says Ségur, "for the evening of a victory." §

"After a battle lost," says Napoleon, "the difference between the vanquished and the victor is very small—it is the moral effect that is everything, since two or three squadrons then suffice to produce a great effect." ‖

In view of the fact, that as soon as the pursuers can develop their attack, they are certain to outflank him and compel him again to fall back, the commander of a rear-guard, when hard pressed, should endeavour to so manœuvre that it may be only

* Alison, viii. p. 171.

† "Life of Wallenstein," Mitchell, p. 259; quoted by Alison.

‡ See p. 129. § Alison, x. p. 42. ‖ "Pensées de Napoléon," 64.

a few hours to sunset when he turns to fight. Darkness falling, before there has been time to oust him from his strong position, will be all in his favour, and under its cover he will be able to withdraw and steal a march on the enemy. Rear-guards and all troops in retreat will frequently have to make night marches; and every precaution must then be taken to save fatigue, and minimize the delays and confusion which to some degree are inseparable from such an operation.

In the occupation of a position there is great opportunity for a rear-guard commander to display special skill. He must impose upon the pursuing enemy, and by his dispositions make him believe that a stronger force is barring the way than is really the case. To gain time being the prime object in view, those positions will be the best which must be turned; and of course by breaking up roads, destroying bridges, burning villages, etc., everything will be done to obstruct the enemy's advance. When Ziethen was driven back from the Sambre in June, 1815, he neglected to blow up the bridges at Marchiennes and Châtelet, a very grave omission under the circumstances.

If the country is at all suitable, the enemy will certainly pursue with cavalry, horse artillery, and mounted infantry.* The rear-guard should therefore have similar troops, in order to check them and oblige them to await the support of their infantry.

The following incident illustrates the helplessness of a retreating force which has no cavalry when the ground happens to be favourable to the action of that arm; it occurred on the 25th of March, 1814, on the plain of Châlons.† A French column of infantry and artillery, about

* See p. 191.

† See letter, dated March 26, by Sir H. Lowe, an eye-witness. Forsyth, i. p. 422.

five thousand strong, was retiring in good order. It was discovered by the Prussian cavalry, who surrounded it. The French adopted the formation of a hollow square with the guns in the centre, where also was plainly to be seen a carriage with a lady in it. The square took no notice of the galling fire of the Cossacks till the cavalry was prepared to charge, when it halted and by a steady infantry and artillery fire repulsed the attack. Several desultory charges were afterwards made. At times the ground obliged the French to form into three or four squares, instead of one extensive oblong. Fresh cavalry came up and another charge was made and, though persevered in, was repelled by the firmness of the brave Frenchmen. Some hours passed. The French were superior in numbers, but the cavalry harassed them, delayed and interrupted the march, so as to give time for guns and infantry to come up. A Bavarian cavalry corps arrived and charged, but the steadiness and resolution of the French commander, General Pacthod, prevailed. Fresh corps of cavalry appeared and numerous Cossacks, and soon the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia. Batteries of horse artillery were hurried up, and when these arrived the situation was hopeless, because showers of grape were poured into the ill-fated square. Alexander wished to stay the slaughter, but the gallant Frenchmen refused terms. The column, shattered, broken and disordered, dragged itself along, leaving behind a broad track of dead and wounded, and it was impossible for it to repulse the immense body of cavalry which now charged. The carnage was terrible, and only those escaped who, being in the centre, were inaccessible by reason of the piles of dead and wounded. The unfortunate lady was saved, but only to meet a more horrible fate—she was the young and beautiful wife of a French colonel. She was rescued from three villains, placed *en croupe* with an orderly, and sent from the field; but

on the road this man was attacked and left for dead, and the lady was carried off by Cossacks. She was never heard of again, though Alexander, greatly moved by the incident, made every inquiry. This pathetic story of the horrors of war is also a fitting tribute of glory to the heroism and disciplined courage of French soldiers with whom Englishmen have had so often to contend.

It is a great point for the rear-guard to hinder, or delay, the reconnaissance of the position by the pursuers. Pursuers in their eagerness are very apt to grow careless and reckless, and thus a chance may often be afforded during a retreat for a sudden assumption of the offensive. Moreau, when retreating in 1796, took advantage of such a chance at Biberach, where he defeated the Austrians with heavy loss. "Such a manœuvre," says Jomini, "almost always succeeds, on account of the surprise occasioned by an unexpected offensive return upon a body of troops which is thinking of little else than collecting trophies and spoils."

Of retreats and rear-guards that are famous, may be mentioned, as worthy of the closest study, the retreat of the Archduke Charles in 1796 before Moreau and Jourdan; and the retreat of these generals before the Archduke after he had concentrated his scattered forces; the retreat of Masséna from Torres Vedras when Ney commanded the rear-guard; the retreat of the Russians from the Niemen to the Moskowa in 1812; and the retreat of the French from Moscow in the same year. The retrograde movement of the Russians under General Barclay de Tolly has well been characterized as an unparalleled achievement. Just before the battle of the Moskowa, better known perhaps as the battle of Borodino, this general was superseded in the command of the Russian armies by Kutusoff. "But," says Alison, "though Barclay was deprived of the fruits of his measures at the very moment

when he might have expected to reap them, yet he gained immortal honour by the campaign which he had previously conducted. He had retreated above 400 miles in the presence of an army twice as numerous as his own, headed by a general unrivalled for his talent in pursuing an enemy, without a single battalion having been broken, a single standard taken, or sustaining a greater loss in prisoners, or artillery, than he had inflicted upon his pursuers. History can furnish no parallel to a retreat of such peril, performed with such success." *

With the retreat from Moscow the name of Marshal Ney is inseparably connected. Well might Napoleon exclaim, when he heard that that heroic commander had escaped the toils laid for him at Krasnoi, "I have three hundred millions in my coffers in the Tuileries: I would willingly have given them to save Marshal Ney!"

"The garrison of Saarbrücken consisted of 6 guns, 450 sabres, and 3250 bayonets. It was attacked by a complete corps d'armée, 25,000 men with 90 pieces of artillery; but so skilfully was the slender force of Prussians handled that the engagement affords a most instructive example of a rear-guard action, and of a well-conducted retreat before superior numbers." † Again, four days later, after the battle of Spicheren, the resolute behaviour of the French rear-guards is deserving of notice.

"Firmness amid reverses is," says Jomini, "more honourable than enthusiasm in success, since courage alone is necessary to storm a position, while it requires heroism to make a difficult retreat before a victorious and enterprising enemy, always opposing to him a firm and unbroken front. A fine retreat should meet with a reward equal to that given for

* Alison, x. p. 27.

† "Spicheren," by Henderson, pp. 48, 58.

a great victory."* The resolute behaviour of a rear-guard may save a retreating army from destruction, and the opportunity for such an achievement may fall to the lot of a comparatively junior officer.

* Jomini, p. 63.

CAVALRY.

It is well to commence by stating the accepted principle that cavalry "exist only to serve the infantry, to which they are distinctly an auxiliary arm."* "The infantry is, and will always be, 'the army.' Cavalry is, and will always be, merely an auxiliary arm to the infantry."† "Around armies in battle it prowls like a hungry lion, seeking whom it may devour!"

A very able article in the "Revue des Deux Mondes"‡ concludes as follows: "Let us make a rapid sketch of the services which this arm ought to and can render. During the period of concentration it screens and protects the strategic front of the armies; it threatens and disturbs the adversary's base of operations; it indicates to the Commander-in-Chief the point where he ought to strike, and points out to him the objective. During the march of approach towards the enemy, it surrounds the columns with a vigilant network, it clears their path, raises and tears away the veil spread before them.

"On the field of battle, it surprises the hostile artillery and reduces it to silence.§ It protects the head and the flanks of its own army, covers its deployment, disturbs and retards that of the enemy. A little later, it prepares the *événement* and takes part in the attack; in a few seconds it gathers the

* Kraft, "Cavalry," p. 224. † Ibid., p. 244.

‡ "La cavalerie dans la guerre moderne"—1889.

§ This is assuming a good deal!

fruit of a long contest. Lastly, it completes the victory or averts disaster; it undertakes the pursuit or covers retreat. In short, it intervenes in the prologue, in the principal act, and in the *dénoûment*. But in all cases, the combat with its own rival is its inevitable prelude." *

This no doubt is claiming a great deal for cavalry; but, after making every allowance for the writer's enthusiasm, we shall see that there is a vast amount of truth in what he says. It must, at all events, be admitted that the rôle of cavalry is an active and an ubiquitous one, and that it is essentially an offensive arm; or, when not actually offensive, at least threatening. "The cavalry commander," says the authority just quoted, "will not forget that of all the faults which he may commit, there is only one that is unpardonable (infâme) —inactivity."

We might have supposed all this written by a German, because it describes what was attempted by the German cavalry in 1870. However, we now know that the German cavalry was by no means so effectively worked as we were at first led to suppose. And, as for the gallant French cavalry, it might almost as well have remained in barracks. If cavalry officers have profited by the object lessons of the war, we should see, in the next European war, that the importance of cavalry has been of late underrated, only because it had not sufficiently studied its part to play it with full effect.

At the commencement of a campaign, the first endeavour of the cavalry on both sides will be to obtain information regarding the enemy's movements and dispositions, and these endeavours must early lead to collisions between the hostile

* It is evident that cavalry officers should be able to grasp at once the tactical relations between the troops and the ground. Subaltern officers of cavalry have to make such important reconnaissances that they require an even higher training than their comrades of the infantry.

squadrons. The vital importance attaching to these preliminary encounters cannot be over-estimated. The side that in them shows superior enterprise and method—enterprise which will distance its rival in capacity; and method and dash which will enable it to oppose him with superior force and drive him back whenever and wherever met—that side will achieve a solid advantage and acquire, at the very outset of the campaign, a moral superiority and confidence which will be enhanced by a corresponding paralysis in the foe, and go far towards securing ultimate victory.

Sending forward the cavalry is the general rule in war; therefore, when we find this rule broken by distinguished generals, it is instructive to seek the cause. Before the twin battles of Jena-Auerstädt, Napoleon had so little information that he fought on an entirely wrong assumption regarding the enemy.* Hasty and shallow critics have taken him severely to task, because he "neglected," as they would put it, to send forward his cavalry to obtain information, and thus broke one of the common rules of war. But it is less profitable to criticize than to seek the motive of a master of the art of war. It is a fact that Napoleon deliberately refused to allow Murat to precede the infantry by any great distance. The motive is apparent from the correspondence with his marshals. The Prussian cavalry was superior in every respect to the French cavalry, and Napoleon did not intend to risk his cavalry until that of the Prussians had been shaken by his infantry. He gave careful instructions to his infantry, and wrote to Soult: "What I am most afraid of with the Prussians is their cavalry." He was also well aware of the great moral effect of the first success in a campaign, even if only an affair of outposts. But after the battle he launched his cavalry in pursuit—there

* Napoleon had many spies. See p. 155.

has never been such a vigorous pursuit—and his squadrons were pushed marches ahead of the infantry. Similarly, Lord Wolseley kept back his cavalry in Egypt, but for a different reason. After the victory of Tel-el-Kebir the British cavalry pounced on Cairo like a falcon on its prey, and thus ended the war.

The moral effect of an early repulse was exemplified in the Jena campaign. The Prussian advanced guard was driven out of Saalfeld and Prince Louis killed. Although of no great importance, it had such a discouraging effect upon the head-quarter staff, that the Prussian army was ordered to retreat on Weimar.

In the early stages of a war, cavalry may be required to traverse great distances; and rapidity of movement, combined with a tireless activity, will be indispensable, if great things are to be achieved. Consequently, the condition of the horses must be attended to. "Cavalry must be active; let them be mounted on horses that have been prepared to endure fatigue; have but little equipage; and above everything let them not make it a strong point to have fat horses. It is certain that no one knows the power of cavalry, nor the advantages that one can derive from it. What is the cause of this?—the passion that one has for fat horses." *

"The sphere of action of the cavalry will always be on one or both flanks.

"The following are the principal tasks which devolve upon the division.

"(*a*) To hold its own against the enemy's cavalry, and resolutely oppose any of its enterprises.

"(*b*) To endeavour to gain the flanks and rear of the enemy in conjunction with the horse artillery, so as to gain information and create a diversion.

* Marshal Saxe.

"(*c*) To assist and support a movement of the other arms made with the object of outflanking the enemy.

"(*d*) To prevent, retard, or give timely notice of any attempted turning movement on the part of the enemy.

"(*e*) To push forward detachments along the roads by which it is expected that reinforcements may arrive for the enemy, give early notice of their approach, and retard and harass them should they appear." *

When cavalry can do no more at the front "owing to the presence of the enemy in superior force, they will draw off to the flank or flanks, and the advanced guard will come into direct contact with the enemy's advanced troops.

"The subsequent action of the attacking cavalry will depend on the nature of the ground and the number and distribution of the hostile cavalry. Patrols should, however, remain in observation of the enemy's flanks to give timely notice of any impending counter-attack. If the ground be favourable, the attacking cavalry will be best employed in vigorous action against the enemy's flanks, and against the hostile cavalry; but in any case it should remain in observation of the enemy's proceedings." †

Regarding the position of cavalry on the field of battle, "The cavalry will certainly prefer not to stand in rear of the other troops in action, but rather in échelon on a flank, since thus they will cease to form the, so to speak, butt of the target offered by the others. But there is not much danger in being the butt, provided that they do not stand less than five hundred paces from the second lines of the infantry. There will be a few casualties from bullets which, being aimed high, may fall among the cavalry; but no one, in these days, is quite safe anywhere in battle. So long, therefore, as it is not quite certain on which wing the cavalry may be required, it is

* "Cavalry Drill." † "Infantry Drill."

better to allow them to follow in rear of the centre. On the other hand, the nearer the decisive moment approaches, the more clearly will it be evident upon which wing the cavalry will be employed. As soon as the general situation of the action makes this point certain, the cavalry should be directed thither, and écheloned on that flank." * A demonstration of cavalry on a flank may, if it does no more, necessitate the withdrawal of troops to guard that flank.

The action of cavalry in masses, on the field of battle, has no doubt been restricted by the increased range and rapidity of modern fire-arms; but it has been too hastily assumed by many, that cavalry can no longer hope to effect anything against infantry. Doubtless, a greater caution has been imposed upon the horsemen; but it is certain that in the future as in the past, the same opportunities will present themselves to a watchful and enterprising leader of delivering decisive charges against infantry on the field of battle.† Powerful sunlight, mists, fogs, rain, twilight, or dust—such as favoured the surprises at Albuera, at Salamanca, at Dresden, and at other places—these will all occur again; and accidents of ground will again be found, as at Quatre Bras, to serve the same purpose; while against infantry engaged with other arms in front, as at Marengo—or disordered and demoralized by repulse, as at Waterloo—cavalry will undoubtedly be able to operate as effectively as in times past. The fact is, that when cavalry is approaching—even when it is seen—it is very difficult, amid the dust, smoke, confusion, and uproar of a sanguinary struggle, to say to which side it belongs, and consequently, the charge may often be wholly in the nature of a surprise. And it is this element of the unexpected and sudden which cavalry wields, that strikes astonishment and terror, and adds so greatly to its moral effect. It has already

* Kraft, "Cavalry," p. 77. † See p. 228.

been mentioned how Napoleon refused Bertrand one minute, because, said the Emperor, "the cavalry would be upon you in that minute, and you would be cut to pieces." There is indeed little time for reflection, and less for action, when it is considered that cavalry can cover a quarter of a mile in a minute; and it requires not only time, but a great effort, to take action towards a threatened flank, when troops, physically and mentally exhausted by severe fighting, have their attention absorbed by the enemy in front. "When the fight is hot, when the effect of fire becomes annihilating, that is the very moment when no one will fire on the cavalry, since every one is occupied with other matters." *

The following examples sufficiently testify to the truth of what has been stated. When Stewart led his brigade up the hill at Albuera, "the enemy's fire was found too destructive to be borne passively, and the foremost troops charged; but *heavy rain* obscured the view, and four regiments of French Hussars and Lancers galloped in from the right at the moment of advancing, and two-thirds of the brigade went down; the 31st regiment only, being on the left, formed square and resisted, while the French horsemen, riding furiously about, trampled the others and captured six guns." †

Again, at Salamanca: "Though Clausel's own division reinforced Maucune, and a front was spread along the southern heights of the basin, the array was loose; it was in lines, in columns, in squares, without unity; *a powerful sun played in the men's eyes*, and the light soil, stirred up and driven by a breeze from the west, came, mingled with *smoke*, full upon them, in such *stifling clouds*, that, scarcely able to breathe, *and unable to see*, they delivered their fire at random. In this oppressed state, while Pakenham was pressing their left with a conquering violence, while the

* Kraft, "Cavalry," p. 83. † Napier, iii. p. 167.

fifth division was wasting their ranks with fire, the interval between those divisions was suddenly filled with *a whirling cloud of dust*, which moved swiftly forward, carrying within it the trampling sound of a charging multitude. It passed the left of the third division in a chaotic mass; but then opening, Anson's light cavalry and Le Marchant's heavy horsemen were seen to break forth at full speed, and the next moment twelve hundred French infantry were trampled down with a terrible clamour and disturbance." * The British cavalry continued their charge, and being quickly followed by the third division, the French left was entirely broken; two thousand prisoners and some guns were taken, and the three French divisions no longer existed as a fighting body.

On the battle-fields of Woerth and Sedan, the French cavalry displayed great gallantry to no purpose. However, it cannot be said that the conditions were in any way favourable to their action.

At the battle of Dresden, "unperceived by the enemy, Murat had stolen round in the rear of Victor's men, entirely turning the flank of the Austrians, and got with Latour-Maubourg's formidable cuirassiers into the low meadows. *Shrouded by the mist*, he had thus placed himself with his whole force close to the extreme Austrian left, and almost perpendicular to their line, before they were aware of his approach. Murat, in order *to divert the enemy's attention* from this decisive attack, caused Victor's infantry to occupy Löbda in their front, from whence they advanced in column against the line, and kept up a heavy cannonade. When the action had become warm between the foot, he suddenly burst, with twelve thousand chosen horsemen, *out of the mist*, on their flank and rear. The effect of this onset, as of the Polish lancers under similar circumstances on the English

* Napier, iv. p. 269.

infantry at Albuera, was decisive. Three-fourths of the entire corps were killed or made prisoners." *

Nothing but their extreme steadiness saved the British infantry at Quartre Bras. "*The high corn concealed the horsemen* from the foot-soldiers; but soon a hollow rush was heard, the corn-blades bent suddenly forward, and the lances of the enemy appeared within twenty paces." †

The moral effect of cavalry is often incalculable, and far out of all proportion to the actual losses it inflicts; and, indeed, the mere approach of cavalry is apt to have a paralyzing effect on an infantry advance, and to arrest its progress at least for a while. "But who can have an idea of the principles of war so narrow and so primitive, as to imagine that the importance of cavalry is measured by the material losses that its sword inflicts? The five thousand cuirassiers who charged at Aspern; the eighty squadrons who, at Eylau, charged the centre of the Russian army; the masses of cavalry that inundated the plains of Waterloo; the six squadrons of Bredow that perished at Vionville, did they produce by their shock any really sensible losses? Assuredly not—and it matters little! For they secured considerable tactical results." ‡

Bredow's six squadrons paralyzed the whole French army. Lord Wolseley says, "I have witnessed more than once the dread entertained by good infantry for cavalry. Let there be the slightest suspicion of cavalry charging, let but a few horsemen show themselves in the vicinity, and I have always found it have a most unsteadying effect upon the men. The moral effect of cavalry increases in geometrical ratio to its numbers."

Hoenig, lying wounded at Mars-la-Tour, after the repulse

* Alison, xi. p. 15. † Ibid., xii. p. 234.

‡ Revue des Deux Mondes, 1889. The French cavalry at Waterloo secured no considerable tactical results, because they did not act in combination with the other arms.

of the 38th brigade, witnessed the charge of the Prussian 1st Dragoon Guards. "The scene that ensued," he says, "baffles description. Both lines of skirmishers bolted, some threw away their packs and rifles, some lay flat on the ground among our killed and wounded, and others tried to form rallying groups which fired in every direction but the right one. That three squadrons actually rode through three lines of French infantry, putting two to flight, seems incredible, especially when we remember the odds against them, and other unfavourable circumstances under which they were charged." *

The repulse of the 38th German brigade at Mars-la-Tour gave the French cavalry, in their turn, an opportunity of which they did not avail themselves. This repulse "was the most terrible thing that happened to the German arms in the war. The brigade lost 53 per cent. of its strength, and the proportion of killed to wounded was as great as three to four. Besides, the murderous fire of the French seems to have had a terribly shattering effect on the nerves of even those who were unhurt. The great heat of the day, the long and fatiguing march, and, finally, the attack and bloody repulse did their work. Hoenig describes the appearance and look of the strongest men as something awful, some crying like children, others utterly collapsed and speechless, and many in whose expression one could see signs that they were for the time bereft of reason. 'A few squadrons,' he says, 'of the enemy's cavalry, and what would have happened? We should not have saved a single man of the brigade.'" *

Cavalry attack in line, but never, if it can be avoided, without second and third lines in support to protect the flanks, and confirm a success or cover a rally. After a successful charge, the victorious horsemen have repeatedly been

* "Journal of Royal United Service Institution," 1896.

destroyed by being charged in flank, while in the disorder of success, by fresh squadrons brought up by the enemy; hence the absolute necessity of second and third lines to guard against this danger.

"The two fundamental principles of the tactics of lines are: (1) organisation in the direction of depth; this provides for mutual assistance from the rear, and concentrated energetic action on a decisive point, and equally prevents eccentric or divergent operations of the component parts, and the using up of the whole force at the same moment; (2) provision of a sufficiently strong line to ensure, or, at any rate, render possible, the defeat of the enemy by the first blow, thus leaving the other lines intact and free to meet eventualities." *

A cavalry action, as a rule, has three distinct phases.

(*a*) The reconnoitring or preparatory phase.

(*b*) The manœuvring phase.

(*c*) The attacking phase.

If the commander determines to engage the enemy, "his first duty will be to thoroughly reconnoitre the ground in his immediate front, and decide upon the actual area towards which he will manœuvre so as to bring about the fight there.

"Positions should, if possible, be selected for the artillery and machine guns and mounted infantry, which fulfil the following conditions:—

"(1) It should command any ground within range which the enemy might be able to take up, whilst affording natural flank protection and cover.

"(2) The ground on either, or, at least, on one flank of the position, should admit of the free deployment and unrestricted manœuvre of the cavalry, *e.g.* ground of an open, undulating character, the isolated features (farms, copses, etc.) upon which do not hamper its movements.

* "Cavalry Drill."

"Such features may also be used to screen the manœuvre of the rear lines, and they present rallying points which can be occupied with machine guns or mounted infantry to cover a retreat and check pursuit." *

"No absolute rule can be laid down as to the exact orders of formation to be adopted in this phase. They should be such as are most suitable for drawing the enemy on and concealing one's own force, while admitting of rapid and certain concentration. An échelon of three lines will generally be suitable, the 1st line preferably in line of squadron columns, each rear line moving in a concentrated but flexible order of formation, and taking every advantage of ground independently." *

The manœuvre phase will now be entered upon in the attack order. "The manœuvres of the cavalry should in general be directed outwards, *i.e.* towards the flank further from the guns, threatening the enemy on that side so as to make him bring up his inward flank. He may then partially mask the fire of his own artillery and present his flank to the enfilade fire of our guns." * The "Artillery Drill" lays down that one object of the cavalry will be to draw the enemy's cavalry under the most effective fire of the artillery.

"The commander having placed the 1st line within 500 yards or so of the enemy, will now commence the attack." * The attacking phase "embraces the attack of the 1st line supported, according to circumstances, by the 2nd and 3rd. The 1st line breaks into the enemy and endeavours to ride him down with the first onslaught." *

The 2nd line must not be so near as to risk being involved in the shock of the 1st line. "The 2nd line supports the 1st:—

"(*a*) By enveloping the enemy's flank and rear with a portion of its force whilst the 1st is engaged with the enemy.

* "Cavalry Drill."

"(*b*) By opposing with the other portion (or, if circumstances require, by its whole force) the 2nd line of the enemy should it threaten the flank of the 1st.

"(*c*) By receiving and disengaging the repulsed 1st line." *

"The 3rd line has for its object to bring about the decision of the fight, if the 1st and 2nd lines are found to be unequal to the task. It forms the last reserve of the division, and remains always at the special disposal of the divisional commander. If one of the flanks of the division is protected by some natural obstacle or by other troops, the 3rd line may be placed in rear of the interval between the 1st and 2nd lines, or even in échelon on the same flank as the 2nd line. . . . It must not be employed prematurely, and should never be entirely engaged, but a portion should as long as possible be kept in hand to meet eventualities, the last squadrons being used only when their action is likely to be decisive." * "It is a general maxim, that in cavalry engagements the advantage in the end rests with that side that can last bring fresh and unbroken troops into action."

"In all three phases of the cavalry fight the mounted infantry will generally accompany the artillery. At the shorter ranges their fire will supplement that of the guns, whilst they will also serve as an efficient escort to them. Both in pursuit and retreat the mounted infantry, when skilfully handled, will form a valuable auxiliary to the cavalry.

"It is, however, when cavalry is called upon to operate in a close country (like most parts of England) that mounted infantry will prove of the greatest use. In such country the mounted action of cavalry will be confined to conflicts between any small bodies (probably not even the strength of a squadron on either side) which may endeavour to make sudden dashes at one another down roads or across country." *

* "Cavalry Drill."

The "Cavalry Drill-book" requires careful study to know how cavalry should be rightly employed on reconnoitring, screening, and detached duties, on outposts, and as divisional cavalry; and the occasions which justify the use of dismounted cavalry. Plutarch, in his life of Fabius, referring to dismounted cavalry at the battle of Cannæ, relates "that a strange and fatal accident happened to the Roman cavalry. For the horse which Æmilius rode having received some hurt, threw him; and those about him alighting to assist and defend the consul on foot, the rest of the cavalry seeing this, and taking it for a signal for them to do the same, all quitted their horses, and charged on foot. At sight of this, Hannibal said, 'This pleases me better than if they had been delivered to me bound hand and foot.'"

During an action, a turning movement made with cavalry, horse artillery, machine guns, and mounted infantry might effect much, and, by cutting in upon the flank of an enemy in retreat, might produce decisive results. Napoleon used large bodies of cavalry with great effect in this way at Champaubert and at Vauchamps in 1814. "Meanwhile, the French cavalry at a greater distance passed the marsh, and, having gained the high-road leading from Champaubert to Montmirail, turned and attacked the Russians on their right flank, while Lagrange's division menaced their left. . . . At the same time, the horse artillery of the French made fearful chasms in the Russian ranks; their cavalry charged in at the openings; and the wearied square dragged its toilsome way along, moistening every step with its blood. At length, having exhausted its last cartridge, the whole of this devoted band was overpowered and made prisoners." *

Again, "While the Russian troops were delayed by defiling through the narrow causeway at Champaubert, Napoleon,

* Alison, xi. p. 204.

who had a body of seven thousand admirable horse at his command, had despatched Grouchy at the head of three thousand of the swiftest among them by a circuit round the village; and by great exertions that indefatigable officer had so far outstripped the slower march of the allied column, encumbered as it was by artillery and caissons, that he had gained the high-road two miles in advance, and was established in force on it before the Allies had extricated themselves from the houses. . . . All at once, on surmounting an eminence, they beheld Grouchy's horsemen drawn up in battle array before them, just as the sun set; and his last rays glanced on the long line of cuirasses, which, stretching far across the road on either side, seemed to present an impassable barrier to their further advance. . . . Had the horse artillery, which Grouchy had ordered to follow him, been able to keep pace with the cavalry, the mass would probably have been broken, and the whole body have been made prisoners. But it had stuck fast in the mud: the cavalry alone, without infantry or guns, was unable to withstand the shock, and the main body got through." *

The great value of cavalry to a defeated army has been many times mentioned already, but it will not be out of place here to recall the action of the cavalry at Friedland in 1807, and at Königgrätz in 1866. "When the retreat of the left wing and of the Guards had uncovered their flank, the infantry in the centre were exposed to the most serious danger, and must have given way, had not the Russian cavalry galloped forward at full speed and charged the corps who threatened them, who were the left of Oudinot's Grenadiers, now forming part of Lannes' corps, with such vigour that they were in a few minutes trampled underfoot and destroyed." †

Prince Kraft, writing of Königgrätz, states, "If we suppose the Austrian cavalry masses absent, then the whole Austrian

* Alison, xi. p. 209. † Ibid., vii. p. 35.

army would have been lost between four and five p.m.; if we imagine the Prussian cavalry away, in that case the charge of the Austrians might, perhaps, have changed the result of the battle."

If a cavalry leader is known to combine dash with prudence and a knowledge of war, he should be made acquainted with the plans of the general, and allowed considerable freedom of action and independence of judgment in co-operating to carry them out. The opportunities offered for the effective action of cavalry on a battle-field must be very fleeting, and therefore no unnecessary restrictions should fetter the cavalry leader's action.

"But it must not be imagined that the general simply orders a charge which takes place at once. On the contrary, it is as follows: the general sees that the moment has come in which he can make use of his cavalry. He then sends off his cavalry leader, after giving him oral instructions as to his object and the duty which his force is to carry out. From this moment he must leave all the rest to the cavalry commander." * If he is to act at all, he must act promptly and opportunely. His motto should be, strike hard, and strike quickly. Napoleon always allowed Murat this independence of action. Wellington, on the other hand, held his cavalry generals immediately subordinate to himself. "The Commander-in-Chief will do well not to let his cavalry leader get out of hand too soon; he must keep his hold upon him, not only until he knows upon which flank he wants to use him, but also so long as he is not certain whether he may not want him to support his own centre." †

Hamley deals very exhaustively with this important question, "*Whether the cavalry should be to a certain degree independent, under their own commander.*" He writes, "In Frederick's

* Kraft, "Cavalry," p. 78. † Ibid., p. 80.

battles, while the king directed all the movements of the infantry, we find the chief of the cavalry selecting his own time for the attack. And when great masses of cavalry were brought on the field in the wars of the Empire, Napoleon permitted, indeed required, that their commander should judge of and seize opportunities for action. These opportunities are, in fact, so fleeting that it would seem impossible to employ cavalry to advantage if they are to receive their impulse from a distant part of the field. 'Cavalry charges,' says Napoleon, according to Montholon, 'are equally good at the beginning, middle, or end of a battle. They should be made as often as possible on the flanks of the infantry, especially when the latter are engaged in front.' *

"But there is great authority for a different course. Baron Müffling, the Prussian commissioner at the British headquarters, urged the commanders of two brigades of English cavalry at Waterloo to charge at a moment when their attack would, as he thought, have been very opportune; they agreed with him, but said they dared not move without orders. Discussing this matter afterwards, Wellington expressed his opinion thus: † 'It is of paramount importance that a general who finds himself in a defensive position should at no moment of the action lose the free disposal of all the troops under his orders. In the battles of Vimiera, Talavera, Busaco, and Salamanca, I allowed myself to be attacked, with the view of assailing the enemy with superior forces as soon as he had laid himself open. For this object it was necessary, 1st, that the Commander-in-Chief, standing on an elevated point of his position, telescope in hand, should investigate, by his own observation and the reports he receives, the disposition of his antagonist, and discover means of hindering the co-operation

* "Maximes de guerre de Napoléon," 1.

† But Wellington never had a really large cavalry force at his disposal.

of his forces; 2ndly, that the leaders of troops should set themselves in motion the very moment they receive their fresh orders. But this could not be done if they were engaged in their own enterprises, unknown to the general in command.

"'Now suppose, in the case mentioned, the cavalry had made their 3000 prisoners, it remained very doubtful whether they could have returned to their position in half an hour. When the cavalry is once scattered, no one can foretell to what it may lead. The charms of pursuit are so great that no trumpet-signal can arrest it. . . . If the enemy should succeed in restoring order and defending himself on a body of cavalry hastening to his support, who can then calculate that the pursuit will be ended at a given time? Who can foretell that a hard fight of long duration will not ensue, during which the main army will remain paralyzed? Who would expose himself to such accidents, and for what? To make a couple of thousand prisoners, which perhaps may have no effect whatever on the decision of the battle. And supposing those prisoners made, still the troops would have lost their first freshness, and no longer render the services in the battle which they might have done without this interlude.'

"Wellington, then, desired to keep the constant control of his cavalry. But two things are to be observed here: 1st, That he speaks of *defensive* battles; and his arguments are so strong that it may be assumed that a general awaiting his adversary's movements should certainly follow his example. But the tactics of Frederick and Napoleon were essentially *offensive*; and when once they had placed the mass of their cavalry in the field where it was destined to act, it was necessary, in supporting offensive movements, that the immediate commander should be left to his own inspirations. 2ndly, That Wellington was comparatively weak

in cavalry, whereas the French and Prussian armies were powerful in that arm.

"It appears, then, that when a powerful cavalry is supporting offensive movements, its commander should be allowed considerable discretionary power; but that the cavalry of an army which awaits its adversary, especially if inferior in force, should be constantly under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief." *

With regard to the independence given by Frederick to his cavalry commanders, a study of his instructions for his generals shows how much, in those days of short ranges, he employed his cavalry on the field of battle to support his infantry and to protect their flanks. Under these circumstances the cavalry could not wait for specific orders, but they had general instructions which kept them within reasonable bounds.

"If the cavalry of the vanquished is equal or superior to that of the victor, then the effects of the pursuit are diminished, and by that, great part of the results of victory are lost." † If this statement is true—and true it is—it is evident that the commanders on each side have a strong interest in maintaining some check on the independence of their cavalry.

* "The Operations of War." † Clausewitz, i. p. 152.

ARTILLERY.

WHAT is the *raison d'être* of artillery? Our drill-book having adopted the views of Prince Kraft, we may take him as our great authority. He lectures the Prussian gunners for an exclusiveness that prevented their being in closer union socially, as well as tactically, with the other arms, till the campaign of 1866 showed up their shortcomings to the whole army, but to no one more than to themselves; and so eager were they for reform, that when the campaign of 1870–71 broke out, the artillery acted on such sound principles that there was the most harmonious co-operation with the rest of the army. And yet Prince Kraft, himself a gunner, still considered it necessary to lay down an important general rule, because after a long peace the practical lessons of war fall into disuse. He writes, "Artillery can produce its full effect only on condition that it always remembers that it is an auxiliary arm to the other troops." *

Again, "Under the present system of conducting war, there is only one arm that can be called independent, and that is the infantry. There were formerly armies of cavalry, but that was long ago. The infantry is strictly the Army—the nation in arms. It needs the assistance of other arms, and these are, and will continue to be, auxiliary arms to the infantry, and can fulfil their object well and rise to their highest efficiency only when they are always conscious of their character as auxiliary arms, and have no other aim than to help

* "Letters on Artillery," p. 386.

the army—that is, the infantry. If, on the other hand, the artillery starts the pretension that it is an independent arm, it will desire that the battle shall be conducted solely in accordance with its tactics, and that the other arms shall serve only to cover its positions, and that no attack shall be made until it has prepared the way. But this implies a mistake as to their relations, for the artillery should prepare and help where the army—that is, the infantry (or, in cavalry actions, the cavalry)—wishes to attack.

"If these relations be reversed, the artillery will often be an impediment instead of an aid, and a burden in place of being an auxiliary. The infantry, that is, the army, will not and cannot be guided by the auxiliary arm. In no case, when the artillery arrives late, will the infantry wait for it, for it will not allow itself to be shot down while it waits; and it will, in that case, prefer to carry the fight through without artillery. The first battles of the war of 1866 showed distinctly to those gunners who up to that time had raved about the independence of the arm, that it is in a position to be of use only when it always remembers its character as an auxiliary arm, and is always ready to *help*." *

"Where artillery assists in an infantry action, the artillery must not allow itself to be deceived by the very great length and increased importance of the artillery duel, which will always commence an action, into the belief that this artillery duel is their principal duty. Their main purpose is, and must always be, to defeat the enemy's army—that is, his infantry—and to this end the artillery must always contribute, as far as lies in its power, whenever and wherever the opportunity arises." †

Infantry, and sometimes cavalry, may deliberately act, but act under a disadvantage, independently, but artillery never.

* Kraft, "Artillery," pp. 156, 157. † Ibid., p. 280.

It must always be auxiliary to infantry or to cavalry. But there is one slight concession allowed by Prince Kraft. He considers that there may be one very exceptional occasion when artillery may be forced to fight independently, and that is "against a frontal attack, carried on over open ground which is well swept by artillery fire. In any offensive battle the independence of artillery comes to an end."

"The artillery may assist to win," says Lord Wolseley, "but cannot of itself win a battle; a battle can only be gained by infantry seizing upon the enemy's position, the fruits of victory being secured by an active cavalry, mounted infantry and horse-artillery."

"Let me tell you what General von Dresky says of this: 'With reference to firing on infantry which is under cover, I gained some experience at Vionville, which was confirmed in later battles. I have found that it is impossible with artillery fire alone to drive *good* infantry from a position. On the high-road from Rezonville to Vionville, about a thousand paces to the west of the former, a field road leading to Flavigny branches off to the south. A bank of earth, about three hundred paces long, and planted with a hedge, stands in this position. Behind this lay some French skirmishers, who inflicted much loss on the two batteries which stood to the north of Flavigny—the 4th Light and the 4th Heavy. Repeated firing on this hedge from the two batteries named above, as well as from the batteries of the left wing to the south of Flavigny, could not drive out the enemy's infantry. It was from this point also, in all probability, that the fire came which towards evening delayed the advance of the 4th Light and the 4th Heavy, as also that which inflicted such great loss on the left wing of the advancing artillery.'

"General von Dresky had a similar experience on the

18th of August, when he fired from his position at Verneville on the wood in front of the farm of Chantrenne, and he finishes his account with the remark, 'With artillery fire alone *good* infantry cannot be driven out from a position under cover.'" *

"It affords matter for some thought," says Hoenig, "that about 132 German guns, after firing for seven hours against the French left at Gravelotte, a front of about 2200 yards in length, had neither broken down nor dispersed the enemy's infantry." And yet the ground was covered with hideously mangled corpses of men and horses. Here is an example of infantry withstanding the great moral effect of artillery fire, and repulsing with frightful slaughter the attack which was launched against them before they had been sufficiently shaken by the fire of 132 guns. Some 4000 Germans fell in the vicinity of the Gravelotte road, and the French infantry was the 2nd corps, which had lost upwards of five thousand men at Spicheren, and upwards of five thousand men at Vionville, and had not since received any reinforcements.

Now, Prince Kraft makes, at p. 245, a very remarkable statement, which deserves much reflection: "If the surgeons who were employed in 1870 and 1871 would make a collective report on the wounded among the German artillery, saying how many were hit by the artillery fire and how many by the infantry fire of the enemy, I am persuaded that the result would show that 75 per cent. were hit by infantry fire."

The power of artillery has greatly increased since then, and the Prince said himself, "Up to the present the artillery fight which precedes each crisis of the battle has not been considered as of a decisive, but only as of a preparatory

* Kraft, "Artillery," pp. 161, 162. It must be remembered that the Prussians fired only percussion shell, a very inferior projectile, and they had no shrapnel, double-walled shell, or high explosive bursters.

character, or at the most it has been held to mark the development of the action. It will probably be otherwise in the future, since shrapnel and double-walled shell produce such a murderous effect, that the fight may be considered in favour of that side whose artillery has overcome that of the enemy in the artillery fight, and can now turn the full weight of these projectiles on the other arms of the enemy. The artillery duel will thus form the beginning of the decisive action, as soon as it is carried out with more favourable effect from shrapnel. It will, therefore, be more necessary than ever to bring up *masses* of artillery, and to be as soon as possible after the beginning of the action so superior in number over the enemy's guns that his artillery shall be beaten down." *

No one, who has in the least profited by his study of modern warfare, would for one instant underrate the importance of artillery. Let us go to Prince Kraft again, and see what he says in two different places: "A frontal attack over a wide and open space will not have any prospect of success unless it be supported by artillery." † "The enemy's fire must in any case, if the attack is to succeed, be much weakened and shaken, if not altogether silenced, before the advance takes place." ‡ The repulse of the Guards at Saint-Privat may be taken as the most telling example. It proved, up to the hilt, that the action of infantry is incomplete without the co-operation of artillery.

It is essential that cavalry and infantry officers should realize the effect produced by the presence of artillery on the field of battle; but it is, if possible, even more essential that artillery officers should study the tactics of infantry. §

Prince Kraft lays down the following duties for artillery in battle ‖:—To commence the action; to lengthen out the

* Kraft, "Artillery," p. 275. † Ibid., p. 137. ‡ Ibid., p. 157.
§ See pp. 231, 232. ‖ Kraft, "Artillery," p. 274.

fight; to prepare the decision; to draw off the enemy's fire from the other troops; to pursue the beaten enemy; to form a rallying-point for the other troops. But how can artillery carry out such a grand and glorious programme, often of self-sacrifice, without the deepest study of the requirements of the army—that is, the infantry?

What is the artillery to fire at? This is a puzzling question, and impossible to answer satisfactorily off-hand. Hamley says, "Guns must bear on that arm that threatens most." * "Never fire at the enemy's artillery," says Prince Kraft, "when there are other troops to fire at." But though this last may be sound advice, it may not always be practicable to follow it. It was what Napoleon evidently had in his mind when he remarked at St. Helena, "that one could never make the gunners fire on the masses of infantry when they found themselves attacked by an opposing battery. It was natural cowardice," said he, gaily, "violent instinct of self-preservation. An artilleryman among us protested against such an assertion. It is, however, the case," continued the Emperor; "you put yourself immediately on guard against him who attacks you; you try to destroy him, that he may not destroy you. You often cease firing, so that he may leave you alone and turn his attention again to the masses of infantry, who are in the battle of more importance." †

Jomini also says, "It should be borne in mind that the chief office of all artillery in battles is to overwhelm the enemy's troops, and not to reply to their batteries." More will be said later on regarding the objective of the artillery when

* It is understood, not what threatens most the artillery, but the army. In determining what guns are to fire at, it should be noted that artillery in the field is equipped almost entirely with shrapnel, therefore its *rôle* is the destruction of men and horses, and not of *matériel* against which it can effect but little.

† Las Cases, i. p. 744.

considering the co-operation of artillery in the attack and defence.

How can artillery co-operate most effectively with the infantry? If the attacking artillery is to co-operate effectively —and the same applies to the defending artillery—its commanders must ever bear in mind that the infantry play the most important part in battle, and, therefore, the artillery positions must not necessarily be selected from a purely artillery point of view; but, as far as possible, the artillery must conform to the requirements of the infantry, and not so much the infantry to those of the artillery.*

The commander of the artillery should be well acquainted with the general's plans; and, having ascertained what are the points selected for decisive attack, he will be able to arrange for a concentrated fire against them. It is generally admitted that this concentration of fire can be best obtained by massing batteries, but there are practical difficulties in massing, and points in favour of dispersing batteries, which it may be worth while to notice. Massed batteries require a great deal of space, with ample and good approaches. The ground does not always lend itself to this, and part of it may be required for infantry. Further, a very conspicuous mark is offered to

* The opinion is still sometimes urged that the artillery should receive first consideration, but this appears to be a manifestly unsound view of the military situation. Whether in attack or defence, the requirements of the infantry should receive first attention, if only for the reason that they form the bulk of the army. Practically, infantry can fight at any time and in any place; but what can artillery do at night or in thick weather, and how much of the country is impassable to them? At the same time, a general who would reject ground that is peculiarly suitable for artillery because not suitable for infantry, would not select what is peculiarly suitable for infantry if unsuitable for artillery, because the requirements of the infantry demand an effective co-operation from the artillery. The best ground is that which is suitable for both arms; but if that cannot be found, the requirements of the artillery must give way to those of the infantry—we insist upon nothing more.

the enemy's guns, and, unless the ground is extremely favourable, there is likely to be confusion and difficulty in effecting a change of position of batteries, either to the front or rear. On the other hand, dispersion of batteries enables more ground to be taken advantage of, and makes it certain that every point to be fired at is within view. It moreover enables a cross-fire to be brought on particular parts of the field, and nothing produces so great a moral effect. Against all this, is the important fact that the fire of massed batteries can be directed and controlled in a manner which is difficult, if not impossible, when the batteries are dispersed. That, no doubt, is an enormous advantage, and is generally held to be sufficient to counterbalance the disadvantages of "massing" which have just been noticed. These remarks apply more particularly to artillery in attack. In defence, where a position, it may be assumed, has been chosen with much deliberation, there would probably not be the same difficulty about suitable ground and space for massing the batteries, and there would certainly be much more time and opportunity to perfect measures, and to protect guns, limbers, and horses from the hostile fire. Perhaps the best guide for a British officer is to keep the batteries of a brigade division together when possible; massing beyond the extent of a brigade division is of less consequence, and sometimes the disadvantages may outweigh the advantages.

The drill-book lays down: "The first principle of the employment of artillery in modern war, is that from the earliest possible moment a number of guns superior to that of the enemy should be brought into action.

"In order to attain this object, it is essential that the artillery should march as close as possible to the heads of columns, that it should be used in masses of the greatest strength available, and that the batteries should be brought up at the

very beginning of the engagement without waiting for the deployment of the other arms." The greatest strength available for a corps should usually be the artillery of the leading division, reinforced by the corps artillery. The batteries of a division marching in rear should generally remain with it. On this point Prince Kraft is very decided: "I do not contemplate the 'possibility' of taking their artillery from the infantry divisions."* Our drill-book, however, does contemplate the possibility. Every precaution should be taken that batteries open fire simultaneously and not in succession.

Now we come to the question of escorts, and our regulations say, "Artillery, when on the march, will be protected by the troops marching with it. . . . Once in action, and where the ground permits of a clear view, artillery can protect its own front with fire; but its flanks must always be guarded by other troops. . . . When accompanied by an escort of infantry, as should generally be the case in close country, the escort is responsible for keeping the enemy's infantry at 800† yards from the guns."

At certain crises of a fight, artillery must be constantly exposed to infantry fire, even to infantry attack. But it must incur these risks without hesitation, however severe its losses may be. The drill-book states: "At 1000 yards artillery can defend itself against infantry; but if the latter approach within that distance, guns run great risk of being silenced. Artillery which has found its range should render it difficult for hostile artillery to come into action up to 2500 yards, when the conditions of light, etc., are favourable."

But it is an advantage to the attack that the great range of modern artillery will often enable batteries to take up favourable positions unperceived by the enemy. Uncertain light,

* Kraft, "Artillery," p. 395.

† Safer to say 1000 yards with the modern rifle.

fogs, thick weather, or distance may prevent observation; therefore it will probably be the exception when guns, coming into action to prepare the way for the infantry, will suffer severely while unlimbering, for their fire will generally be the earliest indication to the defenders that the guns are in position. At times artillery may be so far to the front as to be practically isolated from infantry. In these cases, the ground to the front and to the flanks should be carefully reconnoitred, or the artillery may march into an ambush. Von Dresky acknowledges the error he committed at Gravelotte by neglecting to reconnoitre, and points out how it might have led to disaster.*

In theory, all the ranges are known, and the reconnoitring makes an ambush impossible; but, unfortunately in the field, it is frequently a case of having left undone those things we ought to have done.

Artillery is defenceless without ammunition, and yet, because of the moral effect, this is not now considered a sufficient reason for withdrawing from action. Troops seeing guns retiring, imagine that things are going wrong, and that the struggle for victory is being abandoned. Prince Kraft says, "It is indeed asking very much of a battery to stand still without firing a shot, to wait quietly for the renewal of its ammunition, and to remain defenceless in position instead of leaving the line without orders. Only men gifted with extraordinary energy at these moments, of their own accord, decide to remain in action when their ammunition has been expended, unless this be formally laid down in the regulations as their duty." † "It is astonishing how quickly a battery which has no ammunition supplies itself, when it is compelled to remain silent under fire." ‡ It has been said that artillery must be well

* Kraft, "Artillery," p. 283. † Ibid., p. 113.

‡ Ibid., p. 289. Prince Kraft, for the same reasons, considers that guns should never be withdrawn to refit. The repairs must be done under fire.

forward in the order of march, and so should the reserve ammunition; not so far forward as the batteries, but certainly before all other trains. If this is not done, the guns may soon be defenceless from want of ammunition, and that at a critical time. The supply of artillery ammunition in offensive operations is a very difficult matter, demanding the serious attention of the general, and it concerns the welfare of the infantry just as much as the artillery; therefore ammunition columns must be treated with respect, and not blocked or pushed on one side like ordinary baggage trains which are not immediately required.

Officers of the other arms should know the following regulation:—"The officer commanding a battery must on no account permit his guns to push on in front of his wagons, nor must the officer commanding a brigade division ever allow the wagons of his batteries to be massed in rear of his guns, or to march separately from them. The officer commanding the troops will ensure that this order is carried out."

The following are some of the important general principles of the drill-book:—"Neither a battery nor a brigade division should ever be broken up, except by order of the officer commanding the troops, and then only for some special and temporary purpose. . . . The full interval between batteries is essential in action to facilitate observation of fire. . . . At ranges under 1500 yards on the level, it would be dangerous to fire over friendly troops; at longer ranges on the level, infantry would be sufficiently safe at 600 yards from the guns, or from the target. If the target is in a commanding position, the attacking guns, even at short ranges, can continue to fire till their assaulting infantry are close up to the enemy."

Firing time-fuzed shrapnel over other troops is not altogether safe owing to possible premature bursts, defective or irregularly burning fuzes, fuzes wrongly set, or wrong elevation being put

up in the hurry of action. Naturally cavalry and infantry do not like it; it makes them unsteady, and therefore it should not be resorted to unless necessity justifies it, and even then it would be perhaps better to use percussion fuzes if the ground is sufficiently hard. It is easier to consider ideal conditions of ground for the defensive. In some cases it might be an advantage to place batteries some 600 yards or more in rear of infantry, because the gun detachments would be in a safer position. Indeed, should the assailants be within 500 yards (decisive infantry range) of the main position, the batteries would still be distant 1100 yards or more from their fire. But there remains the disadvantage that the attacking batteries and infantry are, under ordinary conditions, able to advance these 600 yards closer before considering in their turn the effects upon themselves of distant, medium, and decisive artillery ranges. These ranges are now given at 3500, 2500, and 1500 respectively; and if the defenders' guns are to be 600 yards in rear of their infantry, these ranges must be changed to 2900, 1900, and 900 respectively from the main position; and there can be no supports or reserves in rear of infantry that is only 600 yards in front of the guns. The advantages and the disadvantages must be carefully considered in each particular case.*

The Choice of a Position.

"The officer commanding the troops decides upon the plan of the action, and therefore, broadly, on the position of the artillery. The choice of the actual position depends to a

* Our regulations appear to insist upon batteries being in the first line of defence, and this would appear, under ordinary circumstances, to be the correct place. "Field Artillery Drill," p. 29: "The actual posts of the batteries would depend upon the ground, but they should command the probable lines of advance against the position, and be in the first line of the main defence."

great extent on tactical considerations. The question of range as affected by weather, light, etc., must not be lost sight of. In dull weather the adoption of a range, which might be suitable on a clear day, would be likely to lead to disappointment. In addition the position should give the following advantages; they are arranged in what will, in most cases, be the order of importance:—

"A clear view over the sights of the target, and of all ground on to which it is probable fire may have to be turned.

"A good platform for the guns, perpendicular to the line of fire, with no obstacle to movement.

"No ground in front which will afford cover to the enemy or allow him to approach to short range unseen.

"A difficult position for the enemy to range upon.

"Lastly—Cover. Natural cover is generally preferable to artificial, and it should be sought for rather from the configuration of the ground than from hedges, banks, etc., unless these latter are some distance in front of the guns; in this case they may deceive the enemy. Stone walls must especially be avoided on account of the danger from splinters." *

Prince Kraft says, "To any one who is even only moderately acquainted with the tactics of the different arms, the positions of the artillery are in practice so clearly, and even imperatively, pointed out by the character of the ground, and by the general military situation, that there can be no doubt upon the subject." †

In dealing with the attack and the defence, the drill-book is our guide, and it is in almost perfect agreement with Prince Kraft.

* "Field Artillery Drill." † Kraft, "Artillery," p. 415.

THE ATTACK.

Undoubtedly, the first object of attacking artillery should be to ascertain the positions of the defenders' batteries with a view to drawing their fire, and then, by an overwhelming reply, to cover the deployment and advance of their own infantry.

"There are two principal phases in the action of artillery in the attack:—

(*a*) The preparation of the infantry attack.

(*b*) The support of the infantry attack."

The Preparation of the Infantry Attack.

"The object of the artillery is to facilitate the advance of the infantry—

(i.) By overcoming the artillery of the enemy;

(ii.) By shelling the point or points selected for the infantry attack.

"When all or nearly all the available artillery has arrived, the whole of the batteries will advance simultaneously, so far as is possible, to a previously selected position within 'medium' range* of the enemy's batteries. The range will probably be determined by the configuration of the ground.

"Unless the attack is for special reasons to be hurried, it will not be advisable to advance at this stage to within 'long' range† of the enemy's infantry, nor to within 'decisive' range† of his artillery.

* 2500 to 1500 yards. "It must use every effort to avoid all ineffective cannonades, and must thus always go in as close as possible to the enemy" (Kraft, "Artillery," p. 386). The drill-book says, "Advantage should be taken of the range of the guns to annoy troops passing over a bridge or obligatory point of passage at longer distances up to the power of vision."

† 1500 yards.

"The fire should be sufficiently deliberate to ensure accuracy. As soon as the batteries are ranged, the fire of a brigade, division may be concentrated on individual batteries of the enemy in succession.

"When the officer commanding the troops has decided upon the point or points of attack, and considers the enemy's artillery sufficiently beaten down, the greater part of the guns will be turned upon these points. An advance of some of the batteries may be necessary. In any case, time should be given for this fire to have full effect before the infantry is committed to the assault.*

"The number of batteries turned upon the points of attack will depend upon the extent to which the enemy's guns have been silenced. As many as possible should be used; but batteries must be detailed to keep down the fire of guns continuing or renewing their fire."

The Support of the Infantry Attack.

"When the order is given for the infantry to advance, † every gun, regardless of the fire from the enemy's artillery, should at once be turned upon the points selected for attack, and upon any troops ‡ which may take the infantry advance in flank.

* In peace-operations, the artillery duel is always cut so short that it gives "a false impression of this important phase of an engagement." The artillery cannot, as a rule, hope to concentrate its fire on the points selected for attack till it has got the defender's artillery well under.

† "I advise that the batteries should be kept beyond the effective range of the enemy's infantry fire until we are in a position to reply vigorously with the fire of our own infantry" (Kraft, "Infantry," p. 148).

‡ The drill-book is not quite clear. But it probably means "regardless of the fire from the enemy's artillery" on the attacking artillery; and "any troops" must mean any and all troops, including artillery, which may be injuring the advancing infantry. At this phase of the fight, the attacking artillery may be in a sore dilemma. If it fires exclusively upon

"As the infantry move forward, it becomes the duty of the artillery to support them as closely as possible. Although an advance to close quarters can only be feasible when the attention of the enemy is closely occupied, yet the apparent certain loss from such an advance should never stop the attempt being made by a portion of the artillery when the advance of the infantry prevents the guns being served further to the rear.* *But the greater the difficulties of the infantry, the closer should be the support of the artillery.*"

This close co-operation will afford the infantry the material and moral support which it requires at this crisis of the assault, and which, promptly rendered, will probably carry it on to victory. Writing on the attack of a position, Von der Goltz says on this subject, "The best infantry in the world may be paralyzed under such circumstances; the braver it is, the more will its bravery enhance its own destruction. In order to avoid this, the artillery must support it."

To continue from the drill-book. "As soon as the position is captured, every available gun hitherto held back to cover a possible retreat, should push forward to shell the retiring enemy. At this moment it is especially necessary to crush,

the points selected for attack, some guns of the defence may open fire again upon the attacking infantry or upon itself. Are these guns to fire with impunity? They might produce the most startling results. The decision must be left to the judgment of the artillery officer in command at the moment. It is a time neither to expect nor to ask for orders. But it should be distinctly understood that, regardless of all the artillery itself may suffer, it must at this phase of the battle do all that will most help the attacking infantry, by firing at the points selected for attack or on any troops that are retarding the advance. See pp. 283, 284, regarding the unmasking of batteries. It would certainly be necessary to detail some guns to fire at these batteries, for it would clearly be useless to smash up the point selected for attack if at the same time the attacking infantry was so injured as to be unable to reach the point of attack at all.

* At long ranges it is difficult to distinguish friend from foe, and badly aimed shells, or short bursts, may demoralize our own infantry.

by means of a skilful concentration of fire, any attempted counter-attack, and the artillery must run all risks to make good the position." This no doubt means that some guns should at once move up into a captured position.

The Defence.

"The actual post of the batteries would depend upon the ground, but they should command the probable lines of advance against the position, *and be in the first line of the main defence.** Any ground within 800 yards which could give cover to the enemy should be occupied by infantry. Whilst in attack the artillery is often concentrated, in defence some batteries are usually posted towards a flank.

"The action of artillery in the defence may be considered under three heads:—

(*a*) The preparatory action.

(*b*) The main action.

(*c*) The counter-attack."

The Preparatory Action.

"The defensive implies inferiority, even when the offensive is the ultimate object. It is usually of great importance to delay the progress of the action. Large armies require so much time to develop their attack, that, if the attack can be considerably delayed, there is great probability of night putting an end to the contest without any decisive success having been gained by the assailants. The progress of the attack in its earlier stages may be materially delayed by the long range fire of artillery.

"Fire will be opened on any formed bodies of the enemy; every effort being made to crush the assailant's artillery in detail, should it come into action in small bodies, and to

* The italics are mine. See p. 277.

compel his infantry to assume attack formation at the greatest possible distance. In cases in which it is the paramount object to delay the attack, it may be advisable not to unmask some of the batteries until the enemy's attack is indicated, for one object of the enemy is to draw the defender's fire and thus discover the latter's position."

With regard to the defenders' artillery, although it is, for some reasons, desirable that the position of all the batteries should not be disclosed at an early stage of the fight, yet this may be difficult or impossible to carry out, because the attacking side cannot be allowed to deploy into line of battle unmolested, and because every effort should be made to overwhelm with fire the enemy's batteries as they arrive in succession within range. At first, therefore, the target for the artillery of the defence will be the attacking guns, whose fire will be drawn and retained as long as possible, because the longer the artillery of the attack can be prevented from turning their guns on the infantry positions, the longer will that infantry remain strong and unshaken in possession of the ground they hold.

"If the artillery fight can be considerably prolonged, so that the infantry attack commences before its full completion, the extension for the attack will be compelled to take place at a very considerable distance from the defender's position, while its advance must be made under the fire of his artillery. The disadvantage thus caused to the attack may frequently be decisive of the action, and will in any case be most unfavourable to its chance of success.

"If, however, it be found that the attacking artillery is too strong for that of the defence, and that the latter is being overwhelmed, it may be advisable to cease firing, refit, and await the attack of the enemy's infantry."* Prince Kraft

* "Field Artillery Drill."

relates, "I once saw such a retirement and fresh advance. It was at Saint-Privat. We had about sixty French guns opposed to us. After an artillery fight, which lasted a long time, they ceased firing and disappeared. When our infantry advanced to the attack and masked our guns, the French batteries reappeared and united their fire with that of their infantry. They indeed surprised us by doing so, for we thought that we had silenced them." *

The Main Action.

"As soon as masses of infantry or cavalry become visible, or (if the ground favours the concealment of such masses) as soon as the assailant's infantry advances to the attack, the defender's artillery *must direct its fire exclusively* † on them, without allowing itself to be drawn into replying to the guns of the enemy."

It will not be out of place to refer to a difference of opinion. Captain May wrote, "To silence the attacking guns is the essential object of the artillery on the defensive; then the infantry will know how to repulse the attack of the enemy's infantry. But artillery on the offensive should, on the contrary, make it the principal object to play upon the infantry of the enemy. An attack can only be thought of when this has been

* Kraft, "Artillery," p. 398.

† The italics are mine. Very similar words are used in the "Infantry Drill," sect. 118, par. 4. If the regulations were not so decided, it might be added to the paragraph, that the batteries of the attack should not, at this stage, be fired at more than is absolutely necessary for self-preservation. If the defenders' artillery can greatly injure the attacking infantry, there will be no assault at all, or the assault will fail. But where it is not possible to stop the advance, if the guns do not fire on the attacking artillery, it will, unmolested by fire, shell the point selected for attack, and perhaps render it feasible for the infantry to take it. A hard and fast rule for "what to fire at" cannot be formulated; if it could, commanders would be made automatic. The genius of the commander will be displayed in grasping at the moment what it is best to fire at.

weakened. It has only to engage with the artillery of the defensive in so far as is absolutely necessary, always having the principal object in view." * But rigid rules are generally objectionable, and here, for example, it is incorrect to lay down that, in every case, "to silence the attacking guns is the essential object of the artillery on the defensive."

To refer again to the drill-book. "The artillery of a force acting on the defensive must hold its ground at all hazards."

The Counter-attack.

"Should the enemy, after having been repulsed in his attacks, show any inclination to draw off from the engagement,† the officer commanding the troops will probably order a counter-attack. As this stage of the action will not be reached, in the majority of cases, until a late hour of the day, the counter-attack may be forced on with little or no preparation, in order to bring it to an end before dark. The action of the artillery will resemble that in the pursuit, and should be characterized by extreme boldness.

The Pursuit.

"The object of pursuit is to turn a defeat or a retirement into a rout, by allowing the enemy no time to rally, to take up fresh positions, or to form rear-guards. Every available gun should be brought into action at decisive ranges, to shell troops retiring in formation. Horse artillery acting with cavalry will be especially useful on the flanks of the retiring enemy."

THE ARTILLERY OF A REAR-GUARD.

"The first duty of a rear-guard is to gain time; the second is to withdraw without serious loss. With these objects, the

* "Tactical Retrospect," p. 51.

† Not necessary to wait so long if opportunity offers.

first consideration in selecting a position for artillery is, that it shall be able to open fire on the enemy at long range, and thus compel his infantry to assume attack formation at the greatest possible distance. The second condition of a good position is that the means of retiring from it shall be convenient. Guns posted wide on the flank of a rear-guard position have greater facilities for offence, but must be accompanied by a strong escort, or they will run much risk of being cut off. The artillery of a rear-guard is often brought up to a strength out of all proportion to that of the rear-guard itself."

Horse Artillery with Cavalry.*

"The position should, if possible, be well to the front on the protected flank; it should be so chosen as to give the fullest effect to the fire of the guns up to the moment of collision, but it must in no way hamper the freedom of manœuvre of the cavalry." The idea has been suggested that, under many circumstances, the best position for the artillery is straight to the front, where it would act as a pivot on which to manœuvre.† Whichever side is first to fire with effect will gain a decided, if not a decisive advantage over the other.

"The paramount duty of the horse artillery is to shatter the enemy's cavalry, as success depends upon the result of the cavalry charge; its secondary task is to keep down the fire of the enemy's guns. The fire, therefore, should be on the cavalry of the enemy, and it should be rapid. It is only when the guns become masked as to the enemy's cavalry that the fire should be on the enemy's horse artillery." "And yet the case must occur when the enemy's artillery is the arm which is threatening most, as, for example, when it is

* See preceding chapter, where the co-operation of mounted infantry and machine guns is also considered.

† Refers to a cavalry action where there is no infantryon the field.

overwhelming the cavalry with shrapnel.* What is Prince Kraft's opinion, written before the most recent improvements? "The murderous effect of the shrapnel of the enemy's artillery on our cavalry makes it now imperatively necessary to first cripple that artillery, after which we may turn our fire against the enemy's cavalry. This will, moreover, be naturally the case when the cavalry are well led on both sides, since, in consequence of the very long distances at which each side must remain from the other, some accidents of the ground are sure to give greater opportunity of concealing the cavalry from the sight of the enemy's artillery. This need not prevent us from firing with at least a part of our guns on the enemy's cavalry, in the case where they allow themselves to be seen within effective range. For we must not overlook the fact that it is of the first importance to fire on the cavalry, and that, if they give way, the enemy's artillery will fall into our hands." †

We must not forget that time is an important factor, and if the horse artillery fires on the hostile artillery, it may be too late to assist materially its own cavalry when it switches round its fire on the enemy's cavalry, which is a moving target, whose range may not be correctly known.

"If the charge succeeds, the artillery should advance. If the charge fails, and their position is suitable for a rallying point, they should remain in action. Provided the cavalry rally in rear of a flank, and do not retire directly on the batteries, the latter may still avert a disaster." ‡

* The "Field Artillery Drill" does not allow so much latitude as is allowed by the "Infantry Drill."

† Kraft, "Artillery," p. 280. ‡ "Field Artillery Drill."

ENGINEERS.

THE Engineers exist only for the assistance they can afford to the other arms; they never play an independent part. "It is an auxiliary arm to which the other branches will always look for ready assistance. It will be useful, then, in proportion to its comprehension of their requirements." *

The constantly progressive methods of modern warfare, and the frequent adoption of new and complicated inventions for the purposes of war, seem to demand a corresponding increase of skilled labour in our ranks; and this skilled labour can only be performed by trained specialists. The introduction for war purposes of railways, telegraphs, balloons, and mines, and the increased requirements of siege batteries are all matters of great importance to the success of an army in the field, and fall solely within the province of the Engineer.

Rapidity of movement is now a consideration of first importance in all warlike enterprises, but it cannot be attained without the co-operation of the Engineer. Temporary bridges have to be constructed; bridges have to be restored; railways and roads have to be repaired; telegraphs have to be laid; troops have to be embarked or disembarked; a bridge or a tunnel has to be destroyed. Upon these or other engineering works may depend the success of an operation, sometimes the salvation of an army, or even of a nation. If intrenched camps have to be formed, and important positions fortified,

* Colonel Sir G. Clarke.

either on the field of battle or on the communications, the works must be designed and executed under the supervision of the Engineers. In the army, as elsewhere, we must recognize the principle of the division of labour; but with regard to what may be called hasty fortification, such as shelter trenches, loopholes, simple obstacles, etc., much must be done by the Infantry, unassisted by the Engineers. And in these days of study, tests for promotion, and company "field training," there is no doubt that Infantry officers are well able to design and direct, and their men to construct, most of the ordinary field defences. At the same time, whilst it is satisfactory to know that this is so, and that in future intelligent help will generally be available when required, yet the Infantry have duties of their own from which they cannot always be spared; and Engineers will undoubtedly in the future, as in the past, be indispensable to an army in the field. In our small wars, the aid of the Engineers has been, and always will be, essential to success. They have to organize the local labour for making roads—an art in itself—and there are many other important services that they perform for the army, without which military operations would often be impossible.

Frederick insisted that it was better to have too few than too many field-works, because it is not the works that stop the enemy, but the troops that defend them.* Napoleon observed that Feuquières had said that we ought never to await our enemy within our lines, and that we ought to go out and attack him. "He is in error," said the Emperor; "nothing can be positive in war, and we ought not to proscribe the *rôle* of awaiting our enemy within our lines. Those who proscribe the use of defensive lines and the support that the art of the Engineer can give, gratuitously deprive themselves of a power and an auxiliary that are never hurtful, nearly

* "Instruction pour ses généraux," Art. viii.

always useful, and often indispensable. However, the principles of field-fortification have need of being improved; this important part of the art of war has made no progress since the ancients—it is even now behind what it was two thousand years ago. We must then encourage officers of the Engineers to improve this part of their art, and to bring it up to a level with the rest." * If this was a just observation in Napoleon's time, it is much more applicable now, when the increased mobility of armies and the general adoption of accurate long-ranging and rapid-firing weapons have changed the conditions of fighting, and have given fresh developments to methods of attack and defence.

The experience gained in the campaigns of 1866, 1870–71, and 1877–78 shows conclusively that the skill of the field Engineer, both in attack and defence, and in battles as distinguished from siege operations or investments, is daily becoming in greater and greater requisition; but, as the importance of field fortification has increased, so also has the necessity for a wider training of the Engineer. A mere technical knowledge of their special duties is not now sufficient to ensure from the officers the necessary co-operation with the other arms. A thorough understanding of the tactical relations between the troops and the ground is essential, and Engineer officers should be thoroughly acquainted with the tactics of the other arms. Field-works are useless unless in the right place and at the right time. In other words, the Engineers should keep in close touch with the other arms. Whether, as a Corps, they are thoroughly conversant with the requirements of the other arms in battle is quite another question, and one that, during a long immunity from European warfare, unfortunately appears to be considered of no practical consequence. With regard to generals in command, only a very

* "Maximes de Guerre," xlii., xliii.

few, during peace-time, have the opportunity of learning much about the Engineers, or how to employ them to the best advantage in the operations of war. During the campaign of 1796, Napoleon at different times expressed the value he attached to Engineer officers who had a sufficient military training. He was dissatisfied that the victory of Montenotte had not been more complete, and writing to Carnot he said, "You cannot conceive my despair—I may almost say my rage—at not having a single good officer of Engineers on whose *coup d'œil* I can reckon." At the same time he found fault with the military training of his Artillery officers.*

"The works directed by Engineer officers, however excellent they may have been with regard to their technical execution, did not always show that these officers had, so to say, understood how to reduce to practice the tactical ideas of the present time.

"In order to instruct Engineer officers in tactics, it would appear advisable to attach them to infantry for some weeks in summer in the same manner, only on a larger scale, as they are now attached to pioneer battalions. It is further desirable that the latter should take a larger share in our field manœuvres, and that detachments of them should be furnished to commands of the other arms." †

"At Königgrätz, the Austrians appear to have thrown up a good many intrenchments, but there was no tactical connection between the works and the troops; that is to say, the Austrian engineers, acting under the orders of the Commanding Engineer of the army, made a number of works on the ground, ordered by the General-in-Chief, Benedeck, to be occupied; but it seems that the Corps leaders and Division leaders knew nothing whatever of these works, or

* Correspondence de Napoléon 1er, p. 158.

† Boguslawski, pp. 144, 145. Refers to war of 1870–71.

of the exact position they were to hold—they extended far beyond the position intended—and the Commanding Engineer, riding round some hours after the battle had begun, found there were no troops near the works at all, and when they were occupied, the Prussian tide of victory was rising too fast for anything to stop it. This is another of the many proofs that the proper means of working the auxiliary arms of the service is not by making them independent of the others, and thus forming an *imperium in imperio*, but by preserving a close tactical connection between all arms, which can only be done by working through the generals commanding the tactical bodies." *

According to General Vinoy, the French Engineers, during the operations on the south of Paris, in 1870, had exactly the same pernicious independence as the Austrian Engineers at Königgrätz.

One is apt to think that field fortification must mean defensive action. In a sense it does mean that, inasmuch as the artificial strengthening of a post is undertaken that it may be held against attack. But a post or a position may be fortified and held as part of an offensive plan; for example, at Königgrätz, the Prussian plan was to attack the Austrians in front with one army, and in flank, by a long detour, with another. To guard against the danger of an overwhelming counter-stroke against the front attack while the second army was making its detour, all the villages along the Bistritz stream, covering the Prussian front, were strongly fortified by the Prussians. An even more aggressive use of fortification occurs when, a position having been carried by assault, it is at once fortified to save it from re-capture, and for use as a lodgment from which to direct a fresh offensive effort. There is no better example of fortification effectively employed in

* Home, p. 141.

this way than at Mars-la-Tour, described by Home as follows: "Early in the day the Prussians gained possession of Vionville on the Verdun road. The instant the infantry got in, two companies of Engineers supplied with six wagons of tools were pushed on. They were charged by a regiment of French Hussars, and lost some of the wagons and a section of one of the companies, but the remainder got into the village, and so strengthened it that all the attempts to retake it failed; and although at the close of the day the Prussian right and left wings were forced back by the French, yet the village of Vionville, forming the apex of the Prussian position, was never lost, and effectually barred the road to Verdun. Here fortification was used correctly. It confirmed and established the success of the infantry, and secured the object for which the Prussians struggled so hard on the 16th of August." The fighting at Vionville shows the importance of at once fortifying a captured position as strongly as circumstances permit.

Only two days later, at Gravelotte, the Germans on the right utterly neglected the use of field fortification to cover their advance from the ground they had won. A study of Hoenig shows very clearly that they could, and should, have made a line of works right and left of St. Hubert. Behind this protected front of fire, over which their guns could have fired, they could have prepared for the final advance on the French position, and spared themselves the heavy losses, disasters, and panics that would have made the battle of Gravelotte a German defeat, but for the decisive success on the other flank at St. Privat.

There were many notable examples of aggressive fortification in the American Civil War. "The Russians, in the Crimea, holding a straight line of weak field-works with their communications open, actually advanced from their works,

threw up fresh trenches and works, and almost besieged the allies in their positions.

"There were many great opportunities in the blockades of Paris and Metz for the tactics displayed by the Russians to be repeated; and it is no exaggeration to say that, had the garrison of Paris been composed of good troops,* it might really have dug itself out of Paris and through the German lines." And quoting from the Duke of Würtemberg: "The French put a singular, new, and promising mode of attack in practice against Le Bourget, and also against Château Ladonchamps, north of Metz. They advanced from Drancy and Woippy respectively against these places by flying sap. The armistice, and in the other case the capitulation, interrupted this work, which had already progressed far."†

It is an improper use of fortification to prepare extensive works for which troops will probably not be available, or which may detain men who could be employed better in the field. There are many examples in Europe. Great lines of works and intrenched camps like Liège and Namur are costly, useful sometimes, but actually pernicious without field armies to fight outside.

Great fortresses, like Metz, should be regarded as pivots on which to manœuvre, not as places of refuge for armies. A German army that was wanted elsewhere was detained before Metz by a French Army that was still more wanted elsewhere, and it is an important fact to remember that the army outside was numerically inferior to the army inside, and in some respects the former was more advantageously situated than the latter. After this experience, when the army outside is content to blockade and starve out the garrison, who can

* "If the garrison of Paris had been really an army, instead of a loose mass of armed men, it would not have been shut up in Paris at all" (Sir G. Clarke).

† Home.

again assert that fortifications may be regarded as a substitute for men? The same thing happened at Paris on a still larger scale, but the garrison was composed of inferior troops, which was not the case at Metz.

"The conception of holding and fortifying Plevna," says Sir George Clarke, "was right; but it unfortunately, as usual in such cases, became a point of mistaken honour to hold on to the place. The usefulness of Plevna, after the second defeat of the Russians, ended. It is an excellent instance of allowing strategic principles to be violated by mistaking the means for the end. Fortification, field or otherwise, is always a means, *never* an end. This point is not sufficiently inculcated upon our officers." And again, "Thenceforward the defences of Plevna, however laboriously developed, lost all real importance. They could contribute to the repulse of the great assault of the 11th of September, with its needless sacrifice of life; but their existence was the direct cause of the loss of Osman's whole army. Once settled down in such a position as Plevna, the Turks seemed to have regarded passive defence as an end instead of a mere means, and proceeded, with much technical aptitude, to make themselves as secure and as comfortable as circumstances would admit; but it was exactly calculated to promote an immobility, which in the long run is necessarily fatal. On the other hand, the Russians had to relearn by bitter experience, one of the most important lessons of the Franco-German war—the necessity for being prepared at once to strengthen a captured position."

"Field fortifications," said Napoleon, "are always useful, never harmful, *when they are well understood.*" * "Nothing could be more unexceptionable," says Sir G. Clarke, "than these words of Napoleon. We have here an axiom of war; but unfortunately, like other axioms, it does not help us in

* "Maximes de Guerre," ciii.

the least. Like the pronouncements of the Delphic oracle, it is carefully hedged. The all-important qualifying clause is left for private interpretation. Under some circumstances, it is to be inferred that field fortification is not 'useful,' and may be 'harmful.' What are those circumstances? What is implied by that thorough understanding of the whole question, which Napoleon regarded as essential to the advantageous employment of field defences?"

To avoid the "harmful" application of fortification, an officer should first choose the best position for the troops, with due consideration to the weapons in use and to the tactical situation; and not until then should he consider how field fortifications may assist the troops to hold the position. It is a wrong principle to first select the sites easiest to strengthen with field-works, and then to dispose the troops to defend these fortified localities. In other words, fortification should not govern the situation, but the military situation should indicate where fortification will be of value. No doubt in many cases the best positions for the troops will also happen to be those easiest to strengthen by works, but to regard a position from a purely fortification point of view, without giving due consideration to the troops available and to the composition of these troops, and to the tactical conditions generally, must often lead to error. It is an important matter in these days of long ranges that defensive works should be as much as possible screened from view.

The results of purely defensive action are generally merely local and rarely decisive. "The enemy driven behind his lines," says Jomini, "rarely thinks of making an offensive return upon the assailant, no matter how advantageous it may seem. A general and soldiers who seek refuge behind lines are already half-conquered, and the idea of taking the offensive does not really occur to them when their intrenchments

are attacked." * On many occasions, as at Fredericksburg, the attack was repulsed, but no decisive results followed, because the defenders did not, or could not, move forward. The primary object of field fortifications is to assist a force, or part of a force, to hold a certain position.

"Fortification in all ages must have been intended to serve for one or both of two main purposes. 1st. To secure physical advantage by preventing an enemy's approach, or by shielding the defenders from the effects of his weapons, and thus conferring superiority in the use of their own. 2nd. To secure moral advantage, and, by defining in palpable fashion the line intended to be held, to simplify the tactical situation to the defenders." †

In the time of the Romans, and for many centuries afterwards, great efforts were made to render the parapet an impassable obstacle. But this "impassable obstacle" did most thoroughly fulfil the two main purposes just quoted; and the relation between the defences and the weapons in use appears to have been as intimate as in the present time. There was this difference in the defences: that the ranges being short and the battle decided at close quarters, the parapet, being an obstacle, was of first importance, whereas, with long ranging weapons, the defences, being a shield or shelter, comes first, because the battle is decided before the obstacle comes into play. The impassable obstacle shielded the defenders from the assault and offered facilities for unexpected sorties on an enemy in the close vicinity. With long ranging weapons it is rarely of importance for the parapet to be an impassable obstacle, at all events in daylight or in fairly open country.

In the wars of the seventeenth century, "the tactical immobility which such defences entailed appeared to be no disadvantage, and the idea of a local strengthening of a

* "Art of War," p. 215. † Sir G. Clarke.

battle-field which would be no bar to offensive action had scarcely dawned. Moral protection, or the avoidance of contact, being the object mainly sought, it followed that, when confronted by the brilliant generalship of Marlborough, field defences did not show to much advantage." And referring to Frederick's battles: "On the whole, it does not appear that, even when attacked by inferior numbers, field fortification proved any palliation of shortcomings in training or generalship, and the causes of victory and defeat cannot be discovered in the use of the spade." *

In the Franco-German war, field fortification by the Germans was rightly "regarded as an expedient for delaying an enemy with a view to give time to bring up troops, rather than as a specific means of obtaining a victory. Confidence was reposed upon men capable of being handled as circumstances demanded, not upon works tying troops to fixed positions. In the war between China and Japan, one of the principal lessons is that field fortifications are valueless when military qualities are not forthcoming in the forces intended to hold them." *

"The initial attraction of the defensive probably lies in the moral rather than in the physical aspects of field-works. Want of capacity for handling troops in the field on the part of generals, deficient training, or *moral* of the troops themselves, belief in the relative ease and simplicity of fighting a battle in a fortified position, hope of being enabled alike to restore confidence and to remedy defects of organization and tactical instruction—these seem to have been the main motives. The result has rarely justified the means, except in face of an enemy almost equally deficient. The protracted defence of such a position as Plevna distinctly tends to unfit troops and their leaders for offensive operations. It is true that a species

* Sir G. Clarke.

of organization may be perfected; but such an organization being directed to a special and limited purpose is unsuited to the requirements of the field.

"Reviewing the long and chequered history of war, and regarding broad results rather than mere interludes, I am inclined to think that the disadvantages of field defences, as usually employed, have outweighed the advantages gained, and that the disproportion has increased with the growing mobility of armies and the great development of the means of communication. Even where, as conspicuously in Bulgaria in 1877, or in Chili in 1892, field defences have appeared, directly in the one case and indirectly in the other, to open out one of the happy chances of war, the strength of will necessary to enforce an abrupt renunciation of the charms of defence has often proved wanting, and the opportunity has been thrown away. Well might Napoleon carefully hedge his commendation of field fortification!

"Where an auxiliary, whose value under some conditions is undoubted, proves to have been a frequent source of military disaster, an explanation must evidently be forthcoming. This explanation may perhaps be found in a tendency to regard fortification as a species of cult, a separate study, a science with its own special laws unintelligible except to the initiated. To this tendency, now perhaps passing away, may be traced many illusions. Thus we find that fortification has been sometimes regarded as an end instead of a mere means, that it has been permitted to impose conditions upon strategy and tactics instead of being made absolutely subservient to both, and that a remedy for defective organization, generalship, training, or *moral* has been sought in its employment. Paradoxical as the proposition may appear, I think it will be found to be generally true that *fortification, whether permanent or field, whether inland or on a sea-board, is of value only out of*

regard to the operations that may be carried on outside its rayon. For the principal function of fortification is to gain time, and time is valueless unless it can be turned to account." *

Another function of field fortification is to assist an inferior force to shatter an attack and then to take the offensive in its turn. Frossard's corps on the French left at Gravelotte held its position against superior numbers, and inflicted severe losses, but no good resulted, because Bazaine made a practically passive defence all along the line, and neither directly nor indirectly followed up Frossard's local victory.

"The best field defences, the defences which alone can contribute to real success in war, are those which are completely subordinated to a strategical or tactical plan, and which least tie down troops to fixed positions or a stereotyped course of action.

"The employment of fortification in modern war may be divided into two categories :—

"1. Defences usually thrown up for strategic purposes, to supplement or to supply the place of fortresses, or to strengthen positions, the importance of which arises out of the circumstances of war or its unforeseen developments.

"2. Defences constructed in the field for tactical purposes in immediate anticipation of or during actual fighting." *

"If full benefit is to be derived from artificial preparations by the army thus acting initially on the defensive, the preparation must be absolutely subordinated to tactical considerations. The questions, 'Is this a good site for a redoubt, a gun epaulment, a line of shelter trench or of obstacles?' do not arise. Instead, it must be asked, 'Where can infantry and artillery be most advantageously posted, and when so posted, can artificial cover be advantageously provided for them?' At what points is it desirable to definitely check an enemy's

* Sir G. Clarke.

advance, and can obstacles be here created which will in no way impede freedom of tactical movement?'

"The distinction between the two points of view is far greater than it may appear. For in the purely tactical aspect the relative importance of different measures of preparation will appear in their right order. It may easily happen that improvement of communications—ranking last in some text-books—ought to take precedence of any trench digging, and cases are conceivable where a liberal supply of sign-posts might prove of more value than a redoubt.

"In the little German Manual of 1893, the principles intended to govern the employment of field fortification are most carefully laid down. The following sentences are typical of the whole:—'The general plan of action determines the employment of field defences. It is essential that they should, in every case, subserve the intentions of the plan, and that they should not dominate them. The latter case arises when work is begun before the intentions are settled. Premature preparation of the ground is directly injurious and hampers freedom of movement. The circumstances of war decide the choice of a position, which will usually be approximately settled according to the map before closer reconnaissance takes place. . . . The position selected is always to be regarded from the standpoint of the attacker and, where possible, studied from the outside. If it is determined to fortify a position, it must be decided whether a decisive action is to be fought, or whether time only is to be gained. Strong obstacles in front of a position induce an enemy to undertake turning movements, and are often impediments to counter-attack. . . . Before commencing to fortify a position, the distribution of the troops in it must be made clear.' I venture to think that the view consistently upheld in the German instructions is unquestionably correct, and that only by the absolute

subordination of field fortification to tactical requirements can real military advantage be obtained." *

"Cases will occasionally arise when a force so small as to be limited to passive defence may be called upon to delay a greatly superior body at some specific point. Here the use of field defences to the full extent which time and means allow is evidently justifiable. I think that, in the field defences of the future, invisibility will be of the greatest importance. With a little care and some small sacrifice of formalism, this can be obtained under most circumstances, and advantage may thus be derived from smokeless powder which would be lost by self-advertising works. The army which is able to completely subordinate field fortification to tactical requirements, using it whether in attack or defence as a mere auxiliary, will win deserved success.

"Field fortifications should be looked upon, not as a substitute for men, but as means by which delay may be caused and time saved pending the arrival of reinforcements;" * or pending the decisive action of the portion of an army making an offensive movement; or as a means by which a rear-guard delays pursuit; or an investing force delays the enemy till the failure of supplies forces a capitulation. Field fortifications should be looked upon, not as a substitute for men in a general sense; but at the same time it is fully recognized that field-works enable fewer men to hold a position because, being sheltered, they suffer less, while at the same time they inflict heavier losses which may demoralize the enemy. This has been the teaching of the wars of all ages.

The Spartans well understood that, in its general sense, fortification cannot be a substitute for men. Lycurgus, who lived shortly after the time of Solomon, was asked if they should enclose Sparta with walls. He replied: "*That city is*

* Sir G. Clarke.

well fortified which has a wall of men instead of brick." Sparta, though without walls, resisted the attacks of its enemies by the valour of its citizens during eight centuries. Plutarch relates that Alexander was besieging a fort, and seeing the Macedonians greatly discouraged because it was on an apparently inaccessible rock, he asked if the commandant was a man of spirit; and being informed that he was timorous, Alexander said: "You inform me the rock may be taken, since there is no strength in its defender."

History bears witness that the most famous defences have not been made by the strongest walls of brick, but by walls of stout-hearted men. And this is all ancient teaching, but each succeeding war gives object-lessons of disasters resulting from an entire misconception of the value and the correct application of fortification in strategy and in tactics.

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OUTPOSTS.*

WITHOUT an efficient system of outposts, which are to an army halted what advanced guards and rear-guards are to it on the march, there can be neither security nor rest for the troops.

"All officers on outpost duty should consider—

(*a*) The object to be attained by the outposts.

(*b*) How that object can best be attained." †

But this is, perhaps, not very well put. Broadly speaking, the first object of outposts must always be to guard against surprise. But what is obviously meant here under (*a*) is, What are the *orders* for the outposts? Briefly, are they to hold their ground if attacked, or are they to fall back fighting? Only let it be clearly understood whether the main object is *observation* or *resistance*, and then it will be comparatively easy to decide: "how that object can best be attained."

In settling, then, a question of outposts, it would first be necessary to decide: Is it to be observation only, or observation *and* resistance? The next consideration would be: Who is the enemy, and where is he? And finally: What is the character of the country? These points weighed, and determined, it should not be very difficult to estimate the force required for the outposts, and to settle the details of their disposition.

* The subject is only treated generally, the details of the drill-book being omitted.

† "Infantry Drill."

Outposts are usually divided into two lines—

(*a*) The line of observation.

(*b*) The line of defence.

The line of defence or resistance "may be the selected battle-field, or, when on commanding ground, be coincident wholly or partly with the line of observation." * But, more often, in case of attack, the sentries and piquets composing the line of observation fall back fighting on the supports, which "must be placed wherever the ground affords the most advantageous general line for mutual defence."

No precise rules can be laid down for outposts. No two cases are alike, because the circumstances are ever varied, and ever varying. And it is only by constant practice on the ground that officers can learn to apply, to the best advantage, their theoretical knowledge of the very simple "accepted principles" of outpost duty.

"The duties of outposts generally must be carried out upon accepted principles, rather than upon precise rules. The state of the troops, the nature of the country, the weather, the proximity and character of the enemy, cause such different conditions as render it impossible to lay down instructions suitable in every case. Such instructions only hamper an intelligent, and mislead a negligent officer. The greatest latitude and responsibility should be allowed to officers on outpost duty, consistent with the performance of the general object in view." *

As security and repose for the army are the first considerations, it is essential that the line of resistance of the outposts should be fixed at such a distance from the main body as to give the latter ample time, in the event of serious attack, to get under arms and prepare for fighting. The typical outpost-line is divided into piquets with sentries, supports, and

* "Infantry Drill."

reserves. But reserves are not often required except where large forces are concerned. It will therefore depend partly upon the strength of the whole force, and partly upon the situation and the plans of the general, whether a separate reserve is told off to the outposts or not. "The reserve is the main body of the troops detailed for outpost duty, and may be considered as a general support to the lines of piquets and supports. It should be placed in the most advantageous position for defence, if the piquets and the supports have been instructed to fall back and rally upon the reserve, and there to make a stand. If the supports are on the battle-ground, the reserve should be so placed as to be readily removed to any quarter threatened. It must be thrown sufficiently forward to prevent the camp being shelled by the enemy." *

"The outpost line," says the drill-book, "should prevent an enemy bringing artillery *undiscovered*† into any position within 4000 yards of the main body." It has happened, over and over again, that this consideration has received so little attention that the enemy's shells dropping into an encampment have given the first intimation of his near approach. This happened at the second action of Kassassin in 1882, and frequently in the Franco-German war of 1870–71.

In speaking of the distance that the outpost line should be from the main body, it will be well to understand that "the line of defence" is the line from which the distance should be estimated, and in fixing this distance, the strength

* "Infantry Drill."

† The italics are mine. It would often be impossible to prevent the enemy bringing his artillery into such a distant position. All the outposts can do, is to give early notice. And yet the artillery may be brought into such a position before dawn, and *undiscovered*, unless the outposts are very far in advance of the main body, which may not always be desirable, or even possible.

of the main body and the time it will take to deploy will be the principal factors to be considered.

The outposts should almost invariably be furnished by the advanced guard. It is difficult to imagine circumstances which would necessitate the detachment of other troops for this duty. The drill-book lays down: "These forces may be formed from the advanced guard after a march, but if not so formed will be posted under its cover, and the advanced guard will not be withdrawn until the outposts are in position." This latter procedure does not spare the advanced guard, and causes unnecessary counter-marching, which should always be avoided. "When the army advances, the outposts, if not intended to be used as an advanced guard, will not be withdrawn until the advanced guard has passed through them and has secured the ground in front." *

As an example of what can be done on occasion by highly trained men, the performance of the famous Light Division on the eve of Talavera may be aptly quoted here. This gallant band, the 43rd, 52nd, and 95th regiments, under General Craufurd, marched 62 miles in 26 hours,† during the great heat of a Spanish midsummer, each man carrying 50 to 60 pounds' weight upon his shoulders, to try and be up in time for the battle; but though they arrived too late for that, they took the outpost duty immediately after reaching the battle-field. This shows, that however fatiguing and harassing may have been the work of an advanced guard during the day, it should still be able to undertake the outposts without help from outside. On the following day the troops that have been on outpost duty should, if possible, form the rear-guard, so that they need not move off so early as the other troops. "In

* "Infantry Drill."

† Napier, ii. p. 178. A remarkable march without doubt, but Napier's figures are manifestly incorrect unless carts were used.

a retreating force the outpost duty should be performed, if it can possibly be so arranged, by troops which have not been before engaged. These will have more confidence, and be better able to meet an assault, than men who have already fought and been forced to retire before the enemy." *

The composition of outposts must always vary with circumstances, but as a good system of patrols is an essential part of outpost duty, it will generally be desirable that cavalry should form part of the force. Infantry patrols are slow and tedious, and often cannot prudently push further to the front than, or indeed so far as, an officer can see with a pair of binoculars from some commanding position within the outpost line. Cavalry, on the other hand, with a minimum of fatigue, and with a maximum of saving of time, can explore far to the front and flanks, and save the infantry very greatly during the daytime. At night the situation will be reversed; the cavalry will rest, and the infantry will do most of the work.

Artillery may occasionally be associated with the other arms on outpost duty. But its place will be with the reserve, or rather on the line of defence, "seldom in the front line of outposts, except when a defile or important approach has to be defended, or when the front line of outposts is on the selected battle-field." †

It is very important, on outpost duty, that units should not be broken up. There will be far more cohesion, supervision, and reliability when it can be arranged that companies and half-companies shall be kept intact. This can always be managed when it is borne in mind, that piquets may have a fighting strength over and above what is necessary for mere purposes of observation. Piquets "may consist of companies, half-companies, or sections, but should always, as far as

* Wolseley, "Soldier's Pocket-book."

† "Infantry Drill."

possible, be composed of complete units." * "Supports should consist of one or more companies of the same battalion that furnishes the piquets."

"The strength of the outposts," says the "Infantry Drill," "varies with the nature of the country, the character and proximity of the enemy, and the position of the camp or bivouac with regard to the fighting position; whether they are intended for the purposes of observation or for resistance more or less protracted. Their strength also varies with that of the main body, as a small force requires relatively stronger outposts than a large one, but this should seldom exceed one-sixth or one-seventh of the entire force. In small forces the main body usually takes the place of a reserve, and is in close proximity to the line selected for defence. The piquet line and supports should be furnished from the same corps."

The "Infantry Drill" does not lay down any proportion of men to front occupied; and as this proportion must vary with ever-varying conditions, its reticence on this point is wise. Yet it is as well to have some general idea as to what a right proportion of infantry would be under what—for want of a better term—may be called normal conditions. And it may be inferred from the following statements in the drill-book.

"The extent of frontage assigned to the sentries of one company on piquet, where observation only is required, will generally, in ordinary country, vary from 500 to 1000 yards. The supports should be about equal in strength to the aggregate of the piquets to which they are linked." The reserve, when there is one, "will vary from one-third to one-half of the force detailed for outpost duty."

Consequently, we may deduce that a half-battalion may be expected to cover rather more than from 500 to 1000 yards,

* "Infantry Drill."

which gives approximately for a battalion * from one-half to a mile of front, when a reserve is employed; or about a mile to a mile and a half when a reserve is dispensed with.

A chapter on outposts would not be complete without pointing out the grave responsibility which may fall upon young officers, non-commissioned officers, and even privates. There is no case in war in which the capacity of subordinates is so likely to be tested, or where a mistake or negligence may have such serious consequences.

* A battalion in the field will not have so many men in the ranks as it has at Aldershot.

MARCHES, ORDERS, STAFF, SUPPLY, NIGHT OPERATIONS, ETC.

THE organization and administration of an army embrace endless details, not one of which may be neglected without the risk of deranging, or throwing entirely out of gear, the harmonious working of a most complex living machine.

The practical art of moving armies is "nothing more nor less," says Jomini, "than the science of applying all possible military knowledge." An army without mobility, that is without the capability of being moved readily, is hardly an army at all in the modern sense of the word. To be mobile, the troops must be able to march; but the troops cannot march without transport, supplies of food, ammunition, and clothing; so that one thing depends upon another in such a way that not a single screw should be loose, or accidents will occur.

"Marches may be looked upon as the *foundation* of all operations; and battles, the *end* or result. . . . Troops must arrive on the spot where their action is required at the right time and in fighting condition." * "To separate for marching and unite for battle is a maxim more easy to enunciate than carry out. To unite too soon complicates and hinders the advance; to unite too late may lead to defeat in detail." †

"A general has only to know three things in war; to march ten leagues a day, fight, and afterwards shelter his troops." ‡

* Von Schellendorf, i. p. 221. † Pratt, p. 112.

‡ "Pensées de Napoléon," 48.

"The system of Napoleon was to march 25 miles a day, fight, and then to camp in quiet. He told me that he knew no other method of conducting war than this." * Napoleon frequently stated that it was principally with the legs of his soldiers that he made war. † In 1796, and in 1814, he frequently made up for his inferiority in numbers by the rapidity of his movements. "What is the use of the most skilful dispositions, if the troops are incapable of reaching their enemy, or do so with only half their strength, or in a condition which renders them unfit to fight? We beat our enemy quite as much with the legs as with the rifles of our infantry. How will it be if we take all the strength out of those legs by making faulty arrangements for the conduct of the march?" ‡

"It may seem a simple matter to march a single regiment 12 or 15 miles. So it is. But it is not quite such a simple matter to move, say, 10,000 men a distance of 100 miles: and when we come to big figures like 50,000 or 80,000 men, with horses, baggage, ammunition and supply trains, hospitals, etc., etc., we begin to see what system, what arrangements, what forethought are necessary to ensure that such a force shall be moved, even one short march, in a reasonable time, without suffering inconvenience, or incurring dangerous risks." §

The march of an army often entails cruel suffering for man and beast; and if prolonged, the effective strength will be reduced by fifty per cent., or even more; the natural results of exposure to heat, cold and wet, hardships, fatigue, overcrowding, bad water, unappetizing food, privations, marauding, and the aggravation of slight ailments. Indeed, many men die from what under more favourable conditions would not be considered serious sickness.

* Jomini, p. 137.
† Méneval, iii. p. 112.
‡ Kraft, "Infantry," p. 234.
§ Col. H. D. Hutchinson.

Clausewitz* after detailing the misery of the troops, continues, "It is not our object by these reflections to recommend less activity in war; the instrument is there for use, and if the use wears away the instrument that is only in the natural order of things." The centre of the "Grande Armée" crossed the Niemen on the 24th of June, 1812, 301,000 strong. At Smolensk, on the 15th of August, Napoleon had already lost 105,000, of these 10,000, at the outside, in action. Three weeks later, after the battle of Borodino, the loss amounted to 144,000; and eight days after that, at Moscow, the number was 198,000. The Russian army that followed the retreat from Moscow started from Kaluga 120,000 strong, and reached Wilna with 30,000. In 1813, York's Prussian Corps began the campaign on the 16th of August with 40,000 men, at the battle of Leipsic on the 19th of October it was reduced to 12,000, and at most 12,000 were losses due to battle; thus in this short time 16,000 men were lost from other causes.

"In no respect does the fancy of the young commander, who only knows war from books, stand in need of rectification so much as with regard to the slowness with which great columns move. Slowness and toil are the characteristic features of the march of great masses of troops. These can be perceived when, *after the music has ceased*, the individuals are closely regarded. Here a fellow is limping along, with the exercise of all his self-control, the heavy knapsack on his back, and the rifle on shoulder, and we, too, involuntarily feel in our foot the pain which a pinching boot is causing him. There we perceive another, his face bathed in sweat, and his worn features clearly showing fatigue. Now and then an exhausted man is led to the side of the ditch and falls down. From hour to hour the column drags its way hesitatingly orwards, men, horses, and vehicles all covered with dust that

* Vol. ii., p. 38. Figures taken from Cambray.

hardly allows of the eyes and lips being opened, and the sun shows no mercy."* Unless a general inspires complete confidence, if he exacts painful sacrifices from his troops, they will become demoralized, and the bands of discipline will snap. It is one of the secrets of war to know how much can be exacted, and to have the force of character to exact it. If the military spirit of the army is good, it will look upon any present toil and misery as the necessary means to a glorious end.

Napoleon was not a musician, but he says, "Of all the liberal arts, music is that which has the most influence over the passions."† Von der Goltz notices the effect of the music ceasing. Marshal Saxe considered that the effect of music was greatly neglected in his day, but he regarded it as a detail of great importance. "Make them march to music. There is the whole secret, and it is the military step of the Romans. Every one has seen people dance the whole night, cutting capers at the same time. But take a man, and make him dance without music for a quarter of an hour only, and see how he stands it; that proves that music has a secret power over us, and enables us to undergo great exertion. The military step of the Romans was nothing else: it was with this step they marched great distances at a rapid pace. I believe that for the last three or four hundred years, no one has paid any attention to this."‡ Every officer knows how singing may help the men along. Those ideal soldiers, the Spartans, attached great importance to music, and marched against the enemy to the sound of music. The emotional effect of music upon the troops is too much disregarded in these days.

The marching power of the troops is one of the most important factors in the operations of war. "The army that

* Goltz, p. 180. † "Pensées de Napoléon," 290.

‡ "Mes Rêveries," p. 20.

marches in the best order for forming battle, according to the nature of the country, will be certainly best prepared for victory." *

Let no officer make light of the importance of attending to the boots and the feet of the men. No man can march until his feet are hardened and his boots softened. Although care had been given to these details in the Prussian Guard Corps, they left behind at Dieulouard, on the Moselle, 500 footsore men. The Prussian Guard marched on the 23rd of August with 20,027 infantry; on the 31st of August, the day before Sedan, they mustered only 13,000, and they had fought no battle; the fatigue of constant marching had caused 7000 men to fall in rear; and yet all these men had made long marches before the 23rd of August. The boot question is particularly important when troops have to march after a sea voyage.

The effect of railways upon the movement of troops is immense, but it requires the opinion of an expert to know exactly what advantage may be derived from any particular line. When a small force has to be moved to a distance, the railway saves much time; but when a large force has to be concentrated, a simple calculation may show that it can march the distance by road in the same or even less time than by rail; in this case it is better for every reason to leave the trains for the transport of stores, etc. Prince Kraft states that Bourbaki would probably have marched his army to Belfort in less time than he took by rail, and with the advantage that the movement might have been much longer kept secret; and besides, the young soldiers would have profited by the march in every way. Railways afford enormous facilities for the supply of armies, and they enable distant provinces to be tapped, but they are communications that can be easily and seriously injured even when well guarded.

* Hamley.

Proper calculations and arrangements for the march are based on information regarding the enemy and the theatre of war; hence the importance of an Intelligence Department to procure early and accurate information. But orders based on careful and exact calculations are of no avail if subordinates do not, or cannot, execute these orders opportunely. These orders should be based on reasonable assumptions, they should be clear and concise, yet complete and precise, and issued sufficiently early to be received by all subordinate commanders in time to make the necessary arrangements. The marching power depends much upon the physical condition and discipline of the men, but even more upon the system, the skill, and the forethought of their leaders, and above all of the General in chief command, and of the Staff who are responsible for the orders issued by his direction. The most brilliant schemes and the finest combinations must fail in execution, if the orders do not meet the requirements of the particular case; and counter-orders, like counter-marches, must be avoided in every possible way.*

It cannot be said that even the orders issued by Napoleon himself are always perfect models; for example, were not some of the contretemps in the Waterloo campaign the result of orders not being sufficiently clear and complete? "In few campaigns has such vast experience been found on either side as in the campaign of Waterloo, and yet from first to last the blunders, on both sides, as regards orders were of an almost abnormal character." †

Prince Kraft considers it better to have no orders at all than to have them too long. He states that the orders for the Austro-Russian army were so long, that before they could be copied the battle of Austerlitz had commenced. The Austrians repeated this fault in the Italian Campaign of 1859. Von

* On orders, see also p. 80. † Henderson.

Moltke's orders are a model, they were issued in proper time, and all unnecessary details that could be left to subordinates were omitted.

The necessity of a thoroughly trained staff is of first importance. "It is not possible," says Lord Wolseley, for the most transcendent genius to command an army successfully without able assistance from others in matters of detail. Armies are held together by discipline, and discipline is essentially a matter of detail and attention to small things. By no means the smallest talent of great soldiers has been that which they have displayed in their selection of able assistants. The best example of how helpless an army must be without an efficient staff is that afforded by the army organized at Washington by M'Clellan, and, in a lesser degree, by his successors. Many thousands of men were enrolled, splendidly equipped, abundantly fed, provided with all sorts of artillery and engineer material of the most approved pattern, and upon the most lavish scale; yet, as a distinguished officer said, it was a huge giant lying prostrate on the ground, who, though powerful in outward appearance, was destitute of bones and muscle, and consequently helpless for action. The bone and muscle required was a good staff to put it properly in motion." *

"The experience of the Guard Corps on this day, 30th of August, 1870, gives fresh point to the assertion which I have often made as to the fatiguing effect which any change of orders must produce upon troops. The Guard Corps received its first orders about midnight; these directed that the rations should be cooked in sufficient time to allow the troops to be ready to march at 9 a.m.

"At 6 a.m. a second order was issued, which stated that the corps was, as quickly as possible, to clear out of the line Sommerance-Bar-Buzancy, and was to take post in reserve to

* "The Soldier's Pocket-book."

the east of it; the rations were not to be cooked until the corps had taken up its new position. This order could not be made known to the troops before 6.30 a.m., by which time the men had already begun to cook, in order to be ready to march at 9 a.m.; all arrangements for cooking had at once to be suspended, and much of the rations must have been spoiled; fires were again lighted in the new position.

"A third order, started at 6.30 a.m. directing a retirement on Nouart, did not reach the troops till 7.30 a.m. They were again compelled to interrupt their cooking, since the head of the column moved at once. It was calculated the corps would reach Nouart at 10 a.m., but the tail of the 4th Corps crossed the road, which caused a delay of two hours, and the Guard did not arrive at Nouart until noon.

"The troops started again at 4 p.m., and the march lasted until long after dark. I do not think that many battalions of the corps had any regular meal on this day; at any rate, we of the Staff got nothing but a cup of coffee in the evening at Beaumont." *

The military situation demanded these fresh orders; and under these circumstances the troops must bear cheerfully their misery and discomfort. But what can be said of the counter-orders issued, on the 9th of May, 1859, to the 5th Austrian Corps, when the army was not actually in contact with the enemy, and no startling information had been received? The Corps commenced its march early; at 10.30 a.m. it received a counter-order; at noon a second counter-order; at 2.40 p.m. a third counter-order; and at 8.30 p.m. a fourth counter-order. Possibly there never was a general who vacillated like Guilay; day after day, detailed orders followed by counter-order after counter-order, marches and counter-marches, and crossing of columns. The Austrian

* Kraft, "Lettres sur la Stratégie," No. 30, quoted by Pratt.

troops fought gallantly, but there could have been no confidence in the Commander-in-Chief. At Magenta he violated the principle of being as strong as possible on the field of battle, and he was defeated when he might have been victorious, victorious because Napoleon III. had committed exactly the same fault. It was a case of one general being victorious because the other committed still grosser faults. Napoleon III. also vacillated and delayed because he feared the political consequences to himself of an unsuccessful battle. It was less painful to him to resort to half-measures, and await the development of events than to act boldly. Those who wish to read a graphic description of the demoralization of troops on the march who have not even seen the enemy, but who are aimlessly knocked from post to pillar, should read the account of the march on Sedan in "La Débâcle." *

The march of the French army through Metz, and of McMahon to Sedan in August, 1870, are examples of an entire neglect of calculation as to time and distance, an absence of proper arrangements, and a want of an experienced Staff to prepare the necessary orders to guide the action of subordinate generals. Every officer who has worked out the simplest calculations as to time and distance, reads with surprise the order issued by Bazaine on the 13th of August directing the *whole* army to be ready to march at 5 a.m. on the 14th, through Metz, four corps and two divisions of cavalry! A trained Staff is essential, because it is manifestly impossible for a general to deal with the endless details which require prompt attention, and cannot, or should not, be postponed.

Chesney, describing the result of the French movements on the 15th of June, the first day of the Waterloo campaign, sums up as follows:—"35,000 men, at the least computation,

* Zola.

had not got over the stream (the Sambre). Yet the order of the day told the generals explicitly that 'the design of his Majesty was to have crossed (est d'avoir passé) before noon, and to carry the army to the left bank of the river.' *So much easier is it in war to design than to execute, and to move a Staff than to transport an army.*" * In this instance, much of the delay was due to the late start made by Vandamme's Corps. "Vandamme's Corps lay in front, and Vandamme had no orders! The solitary officer who bore them had fallen on the way, and been badly hurt, and Vandamme lay tranquilly in bivouac until Lobau's Corps, which had started at four, came up, and the state of things was with difficulty explained." † Thus, where moves of such magnitude and importance are in question, it is obviously unsafe to trust to one single message to have them carried out. A similar neglect occurred in 1807, when the capture of a single messenger delayed the arrival of Bernadotte's Corps two days, and left him out of the hard-fought battle of Eylau.‡ These are instances of combinations being marred through orders not being issued with sufficient precautions. Examples are not wanting of delays, and even disasters, being occasioned through orders for marches being inaccurate, or insufficient. Napoleon's orders to Grouchy after Ligny are a striking illustration. To quote again from the campaign of 1815: there were two roads by which the Prussians could move from Wavre to Waterloo; Bulow's corps was to march by the southern of these roads, Ziethen's by the northern. But by some mistake of the Prussian Staff, the former in getting into position was allowed to cross the line of march of the latter. The delay caused by two army corps, each 30,000 strong, crossing each other's line of march may be imagined.

* Chesney's "Waterloo Lectures," p. 80. † Ibid., p. 73.
‡ Ibid., p. 88.

Again, there is the extraordinary mistake made on the eve of the battle of Wagram, for which Berthier, the chief of the Staff, is responsible, though "doubtless," says Jomini, "the error originated with Napoleon himself." The French army "was assembled in the island of Lobau, on the evening of the 4th of July, 1809. Three bridges were immediately thrown over an arm of the Danube 150 yards wide, on a very dark night, amidst torrents of rain, and 150,000 men were passed over them in presence of a formidable enemy * (who, however, offered no serious opposition to the passage), and were drawn up before midday on the 5th in the plain, three miles in advance of the bridges. . . . Singularly enough, the Chief of the Staff did not observe that by mistake the bridge of the centre had been assigned to Davoust, who had the right wing, whilst the bridge on the right was assigned to Oudinot, who was in the centre. These two corps passed each other in the night, and had it not been for the good sense of the men and their officers, a dreadful scene of confusion might have arisen. Thanks to the supineness of the enemy, the army escaped all disorder except that arising from a few detachments following corps to which they did not belong." †

Nothing deranges so much the Commissariat arrangements like counter-orders—unless it is a change of direction to a flank, like the great strategical wheel made by Napoleon just before Jena, or that made by the Germans in the Sedan campaign. "Order, counter-order, disorder." "A good soldier has his stomach full." A hungry man, or a hungry horse, is good for nothing. The principal cause of Napoleon's failure in 1812 was the want of provisions.

"It is essential to the comfort and physical well-being

* 140,000 men with 500 guns.

† Jomini's "Art of War," p. 266.

of the men to allow them to rest at their bivouacs until the latest possible moment. When the column of route will extend over several miles of road, it is cruel and foolish to order all the troops to parade at the same hour; it is by close attention to these minutiæ that men are kept in good health and spirits, and that a staff officer shows he is worthy of the important position he occupies. To assemble the whole of a division at a rendezvous to be marched off from thence is a military folly not very uncommon; the unfortunate regiments are kept waiting under arms, sometimes for hours, until their turn arrives to march off. The staff officer should see how each can, with most convenience to itself, be brought into its place in the column of route." *

The weather, the state of the roads, and the number of roads available are matters affecting not merely the execution of a march, but also the health, discipline, and efficiency of the men. In the invasion of Russia, "the sultry heat of the weather at the crossing of the Niemen (June 24–25th, 1812) was succeeded by a tempest, the fury of which resembled the devastating hurricanes of tropical climates. Upon the countless multitudes of Napoleon, who traversed an exhausted country covered with sterile sands or inhospitable forests, its violence fell with unmitigated severity. The horses perished by thousands, from the combined effects of incessant rain and unwholesome provender; 125 pieces of cannon and 500 caissons were left at Wilna, from want of the means of transport; above 10,000 dead horses were found on the highway leading from the Niemen to that city alone; 30,000 disbanded soldiers spread desolation round the army; and before it had been six days in Russian territory, or a single shot had been fired, 25,000 sick and dying men filled the hospitals of Wilna, and the villages of Lithuania." †

* Wolseley. † Alison, x. p. 2.

"The better the troops are housed, the more perfect will be their rest, and, consequently, the better the chance of preserving their health and strength. Thus bivouacking in the open air should never be resorted to unless absolutely necessary, and this point cannot be too strongly insisted on. Experience has shown, indeed, that more men are lost to an army by such a proceeding, especially in inclement weather, than by the hardest-fought battles on record." *

"A few bad nights passed without necessity in the open," says Von der Goltz, "may well do as much harm as an unfavourable action." "The rule that the worst cantonment is better than the best bivouac, is one that cannot for a moment be doubted; but it is nevertheless constantly broken." † "In bad weather it is better for troops even to fall back a few miles, leaving a sufficient force to maintain the touch, rather than bivouac, if by this means a good night's rest can be secured." ‡

If the troops are to be at the right place at the right time, all straggling and pillage must be rigorously suppressed. There was, perhaps, never a nation whose armies observed such perfect discipline on the march as the Germans in 1870–71. But if supplies are not at hand, it is impossible to prevent marauding. It commenced at once in the Russian campaign of 1812. The Emperor took what steps he could, but "before a great part of the army had ever seen the enemy, it had already undergone a loss greater than might have been expected in the most bloody campaign." § Plunder is a great temptation, and reference has been made at p. 194 to the serious consequences of the marauding after the battle of Vittoria.

Napoleon said:—"Nothing is more calculated to disorganize

* Von Schellendorf, ii. p. 168.
† Ibid., i. p. 202.
‡ "Cavalry Drill."
§ Alison, x. p. 12.

and to utterly destroy an army than pillage." * He defends the character of the French soldiers, adding:—"Never will they have to reproach themselves with having conducted themselves in so barbarous a manner as did the English at Badajos, and at St. Sebastian, towards the inhabitants of those two towns that were their allies." The manner in which Wellington's army was recruited accounts for the atrocities referred to, though it does not excuse them. A recurrence of such scenes would be impossible with the British soldier of the present day. Frederick considered that marauding caused every kind of disorder, and he enjoined his generals to suppress it.

The question of supplies even more closely affects the condition of an army, and its mobility, than the weather, or the state of the roads. "Napoleon himself was indefatigable in the pains which he took to provide subsistence for his troops, and accurately calculating the period when the supplies ordered should arrive at their several points of destination, he invariably acted on the supposition that they had done so; and was deaf to all representations that the troops were starving, because he had given directions sufficient, if executed, to have prevented such a calamity. He never took into consideration the many cases in which the Commissariat were physically unable to execute his orders for the feeding of the enormous multitudes which were latterly assembled round his banners. Yet such was the vehemence of his temper that few had the moral courage necessary to withstand the ebullition consequent on the disclosure of unexpected and unpleasant truths." †

In the Peninsular War, the provision of adequate supplies and transport for his troops gave Wellington more trouble

* "Maximes de Guerre," cvii.

† Alison, x. p. 288. This description of Napoleon is not altogether just.

and anxiety than the French armies ever did. The Spanish authorities, though ever lavish with promises, were utterly unreliable in such matters, and to such straits did they sometimes reduce the English by their apathy, and total disregard of their obligations, that more than once the Duke had to threaten to withdraw his troops to Portugal, where they might be supplied from their own magazines. "For the month which followed the battle of Talavera, their distresses in this respect had been indeed excessive, and had reached a height which was altogether insupportable," so that, instead of advancing on Madrid after that victory, he had to retire and take up a position within the Portuguese frontier, in order to be able to feed his troops.

With English armies, it has been the wise and honourable rule to pay for all supplies. It often has been, and often will be, necessary to requisition what is wanted; but when payment follows, more than half the hardship of a requisition, however peremptory, disappears. "The system which the Allies adopted on entering France was eminently calculated to render the inhabitants favourable to their operations: money, the sinews of war, was as abundant with them as it was wanting with us; they scattered it abroad with profusion, and took nothing without paying for it with hard cash on the spot. The English knew well that this affected generosity would do us more mischief than their arms, and, in point of fact, they thus obtained resources which we had been incapable of discovering." *

The French, on the other hand, acted very differently in the Peninsula. "The mode," wrote the Duke, "in which they provide for their armies is this: they plunder everything they find in the country; they force from the inhabitants, under

* Pellot, "Mémoires de la guerre des Pyrénées," p. 80. Quoted by Alison, xi. p. 130.

pain of death, all that they have in their houses for the consumption of the year, without payment; and are indifferent regarding the consequences to the unfortunate people. Every article, whether of food or raiment, and every animal and vehicle of every description, is considered to belong of right, and without payment, to the French army: and they require a communication with their rear only for the purpose of conveying intelligence to, and receiving orders from, the Emperor." * Such a system is something more than reckless and unprincipled; it is a blunder; and in the end the evils of it must recoil, as History has abundantly proved, on the heads of those who adopt it.

"When it is recollected, indeed, that nearly 400,000 French soldiers were permanently quartered on the Spanish territory, and had been so now for three years; that during the whole of that time this immense body had been paid, fed, clothed, and lodged chiefly at the expense of the conquered districts, which had already been exhausted by the contributions of their own troops and guerillas, and devastated by all the horrors of war during four successive campaigns; it becomes rather a matter of astonishment how they contrived to extract anything at all in the end from a country so long exposed to such devastations, than that their rapine could be levied only by the last atrocities of military execution. . . . It was this oppressive system of military contributions, thus adopted by the French commanders, and invariably acted upon from the very outset of the revolutionary war, and not the passing devastations of the soldiers, that was the principal evil which provoked so universal a spirit of hostility to their government.

"The English soldiers at times plundered just as much as their opponents; and, perhaps, from their habits of intoxication, and the inferior class in society from which they were

* Alison, vii. p. 293.

drawn, they were on such occasions more brutal in their disorders than the French.* But there was one difference between the two, and it was a vital one to the inhabitants of the conquered countries. The English plunder was merely the unauthorized work of the common men, and was invariably repressed by the officers when order was restored; the whole supplies for the troops being paid with perfect regularity from the public funds of government. Whereas the French exactions were the result of a systematic method of providing for their armies, enjoined by express command upon all the imperial generals, and forming the ground-work of the whole military policy of Napoleon." †

In the war of 1870–71, the Germans were quite unable to supply their armies from magazines, and levied heavy requisitions in kind; and also contributions in money which enabled them to purchase in the open market. "Though the system of requisitions was largely employed by the Germans in their last war, still they reckon that it only yielded about one-third of the provisions and forage required for their armies. The other two-thirds were provided by the Intendantur." ‡ No rapid movements can be made unless the troops, for the time being, draw most of their supplies from the country passed through. "If you wish to reap great results from an impending action," says Lord Wolseley, "every exertion should be made beforehand to collect supplies for several days at some point within one day's easy march in

* A description totally inapplicable to the British soldier of the present day. His bravery is beyond question. Even when outnumbered he is calm and collected. Under privations he is patient and uncomplaining, obedient and enduring. He is devotedly attached to his officers, and on active service, when there is no liquor, his conduct is exemplary.

† Alison, ix. p. 130.

‡ Furse, "Lines of Communication in War," p. 205; also Kraft, "Lettres sur la Stratégie," No. 22.

rear of the army. Two days' rations should always be issued the evening before a battle. During peace, rations should be occasionally issued direct to the soldier in quantities to last two or three days. It teaches him to economize his food, so that when it becomes necessary, as it frequently does in war, to give him several days' supply at a time, it may not be a new thing for him to exercise discretion and care." *

"The most important secret in war consists in making one's self master of the communications." † Presumably the communications of the enemy as well as our own; but it is with our own that we are now concerned. The army requires reinforcements of men, horses, and guns; its requirements in cattle, ammunition, provisions, and stores of all kinds must be forwarded from the base or the army cannot exist. Then there is the flow in the opposite direction of sick, wounded, prisoners, etc., and in case of retreat, the whole army with its impedimenta. In our future wars, the roads, railways, and rivers which communicate with the base will be placed under an officer of high rank who, with his staff, will be responsible for the working of the transport, and for the maintenance and defence of the communications. He will have under his command distinct troops, so that the general commanding the field army will be relieved of anxiety, and will not, as formerly, have to reduce his force in order to provide garrisons and maintain connection with his base. The Germans used principally Landwehr troops for the communications.

The supply of an army is a special study. "The results of a campaign are gauged by the victories and other feats of arms; adequate credit is seldom accorded to the efforts of the administrative officers who indirectly contribute a great share to its successful issue. We are all familiar with Napoleon's marshals and with most of his generals; what, however, do we know of

* "Soldier's Pocket-book." † "Pensées de Napoléon," 47.

his supply officers? Nevertheless, to keep his armies moving over the greater part of Europe, as he did for a period of twenty years, he must have had many very able commissaries besides Daru." * The supply of the great German armies, in 1870–71, is an instructive study in startling contrast to the miserable arrangements for our small stationary army in the Crimea, where the troops were badly fed, badly clothed, and badly sheltered, although within a few miles of the sea of which we had undisputed command.

In our small wars we can rarely draw our supplies from the country; all has to be sent forward from the base, consequently the rate of progress depends upon that of the transport, because magazines must be formed at the front before a further advance becomes possible. The more rapid the operations, the less the cost of the war and the less the ill-effects from climate, consequently in our small wars the transport question is always uppermost.

The ammunition-supply requires most serious consideration. "All the suggestions which have been made with respect to the supply of ammunition are impracticable from the moment the infantry fight begins at 550 yards." † "When acting on the offensive, especially in open ground, a renewal of ammunition is, as I have said above, absolutely impossible. If, therefore, we do not wish to be exposed to the risk of seeing our offensive fail for lack of ammunition, we must seek for some means of preventing the expenditure of it from being excessive. The only way in which this can be managed is by taking care that the attack is not commenced until the enemy has been obviously broken by the fire of our artillery, and that the attack is then carried out in such strength, and with such a decisive use of the supports, and eventually of the second line, that, owing to the application of these two principles, the time

* Furse, p. 219. † Kraft, "Infantry," p. 156.

during which the infantry must keep up the fire-fight shall be cut as short as possible. But this will be possible only when the attack is properly thought out, and when, as at Villejouan, the combined action of the two arms has been previously concerted." *

To return for a moment to marches: there is one point in connection with them to which attention may be usefully drawn here. It is the importance to every officer, but particularly to Staff Officers and those in high command, of being in possession of reliable maps of the theatre of operations. No one ever considered this more essential than Napoleon. He had "with great pains collected a magnificent set of maps, the finest probably in existence, which was his constant companion in the campaigns of Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, and Aspern. It was lost during the Moscow retreat, and its place was never afterwards adequately supplied." † And again, "the maps were frequently called for and spread out on the ground, and the Emperor, lying down beside them, was soon as completely absorbed in his plans as if he had been in his cabinet at St. Cloud." ‡

"Provided with a pair of dividers opened to a distance by the scale of from 17 to 20 miles in a straight line (which made from 22 to 25 miles, taking into account the windings of the roads), bending over, and sometimes stretched at full length upon his map, where the positions of his Corps and the supposed positions of the enemy were marked by pins of different colours, he was able to give orders for extensive movements with a certainty and precision which were astonishing. Turning his dividers about from point to point on the map, he decided in a moment the number of marches necessary for each of his columns to arrive at the desired point by a certain

* Kraft, "Infantry," p. 174.

† Alison, x. p. 297. ‡ Ibid., p. 294.

day; then placing pins in the new positions, and bearing in mind the rate of marching he must assign to each column, he dictated those instructions which alone are enough to make any man famous." *

Not only are maps necessary, but officers must be able to read them readily, and by their aid find their way across country. During the operations in the Pyrenees in 1813, "though the light division marched forty miles in nineteen hours, and bore their extraordinary fatigues with surprising spirit, yet, *if they had not lost their way* in the wilds, they would have been two hours earlier at the perilous bridge, and none of Reille's division would have escaped." † Guides with a knowledge of the country should always, if possible, be procured.

Flank marches, forced marches, and night operations, are special efforts, involving special fatigues and risks, which must be met by extraordinary efforts, by special arrangements, and by special precautions. The danger of making a flank march is a question of the conditions under which it is made. Within striking distance of the enemy, such a movement is full of danger; witness Frederick's disaster at Kolin, the crushing defeat of the French by Frederick at Rossbach, the penalty paid by Marmont at Salamanca, and by Ney at Dennewitz; but when executed beyond risk of interruption by him, the peril is practically *nil;* for example, Frederick's successful flank march at Leuthen. "We must avoid flank marches," says Napoleon, "and when we make them, we must make them as short as possible and with extreme rapidity." ‡

"Forced marches," says Lord Wolseley, "should be avoided as much as possible, for they fill your hospitals with sick. At times they are of course necessary, but when made to excess,

* Jomini, "The Art of War," p. 264.

† Alison, x. p. 263. ‡ "Maximes de Guerre," cvi.

they are ruinous to military efficiency." It is better not to attempt to define a forced march, because so much depends upon the condition of the troops and upon the weather; but time, not distance, is the first consideration. Forced marches, to be carried out successfully, require that the men should be in fine condition, and a high state of discipline. A good modern example is Lord Roberts's march from Kaubul to Kandahar. In the Jena campaign Napoleon's troops made forced marches with success; but, on the Prussian side, the forced marches, the counter-orders, and the want of decision in the leaders caused the rigid discipline of the troops to relax long before the great battle. In 1870, the Germans made many forced marches, but discipline was maintained, because counter-orders were avoided, and there was no sign of indecision.

Night marches are nearly always a mistake;* but night operations, like that of the Peiwar Kotal in 1878, and of Tel-el-Kebir in 1882, will be more frequent than in the past, for, under cover of darkness, it will be possible to neutralize the effects of modern fire-arms at long ranges by occupying advanced positions without loss, somewhat as the 1st Parallel is occupied at sieges. A force of 17,401 men with 61 guns marched on Tel-el-Kebir, and in the battle its losses were only 439. Bright or moonlight nights are the most favourable, for not only are the troops invisible at a moderate distance, but there is more supervision and less confusion than on a dark night, because objects in the immediate vicinity are sufficiently distinct.

Theoretically much may be done at night, practically but little. The ground should be thoroughly known, and all arrangements simple. When the English were advancing on Seringapatam, two columns were sent on a dark night against

* See p. 193.

Tippoo's outposts. The left was successful, but the right, under Wellington, then Col. Wellesley, failed. "He resolved thenceforth, and his reason explains the failure, that of his own will he would 'never suffer an attack to be made by night upon an enemy who is prepared and strongly posted, and whose posts have not been reconnoitred by daylight.'" *

Frederick said: "As for me, I will never attack at night, because the darkness gives rise to many disorders, and because the greater number of soldiers only do their duty when under the eyes of their officers, and when they fear punishment for not doing so." † In 1715, Charles XII. made a night attack with 4000 men, the enemy having 20,000. Although he was beaten, Frederick commends him for this night attack because it was of great importance to screen the smallness of his force. "It is rarely that circumstances favour the expectation of a successful result from a night attack." ‡ The complete rout of Marmont's corps, in 1814, at Laon, is an example of a very successful night attack. The French lost 40 guns and 2500 prisoners, the Prussian loss was not 300 men. An even more successful operation occurred on October 14, 1758, when Marshal Daun, with 90,000 men, entirely deceived Frederick the Great into supposing that he would act on the defensive; Frederick himself was awaiting supplies, and believed that Daun would never dare to attack him. Daun, with 30,000 men, made a remarkably successful night march round the Prussian right flank, and as the clock from the steeple struck five, the signal agreed upon, the Austrians commenced the battle of Hochkirch, in which Frederick was surprised and defeated with a loss of 10,000 men. Frederick's outposts were alert enough, but patrolling towards the flank must have been neglected, because the Austrians fell upon the outposts

* Hooper, p. 41.

† "Instructions pour ses généraux," Art. xxii.

‡ Clausewitz, i. p. 137.

in overwhelming force. This is also an example of the penalty paid by a great general who imprudently scorned his antagonist, though Daun was a commander of considerable experience and repute.

Fifteen hundred Frenchmen from Quebec, in 1759, undertook a night attack upon the English; all was going well when the advanced party lost nerve, and retiring upon the main body was fired upon by mistake; the fire was returned, and then ensued a perfect but groundless panic, because not an Englishman had moved. Some weeks later the English undertook the successful night operation which was followed by one of the most glorious battles in the annals of war—and in which fell the two opposing heroes, Montcalm and Wolfe—the British victory on the heights of Abrabam.

The ancients understood the risks of night attacks on a large scale. Pompey the Great, being afraid Mithridates would move off, paraded his troops at midnight, but hesitated to attack, because the king had received information and was prepared. However, Pompey was persuaded by his generals to fight. There was sufficient moonlight to distinguish objects, and the fighting resulted in a great Roman victory.

OLD AND YOUNG SOLDIERS COMPARED: SANITATION.

In any comparison between old and young soldiers, the two essential points that suggest themselves for consideration are—

(*a*) Their respective fighting capacity.

(*b*) Their ability to endure the privations and hardships of a campaign.

As regards the first of these essentials, there is abundant testimony to prove that young soldiers are conspicuous for dash and impetuous bravery, but they lack discipline, training, and experience. The older soldiers, though not less brave, are calmer, steadier, and more reliable, but inferior in *élan* and in enthusiasm. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is nevertheless a fact that old age, with nearly everything behind it, is often unduly prudent and cautious; while youth, with nearly all before it, is always impetuous and reckless. "I had nothing," said Ney after the battle of Lutzen, "but battalions of conscripts, but I had good reason to congratulate myself on their conduct. I doubt if I could have achieved so much with the Grenadiers of the Guard. I had before me the best troops of the enemy, including the whole Prussian Guard. Our bravest warriors, after having twice failed, would probably have never carried the villages. But *five times* I led back those brave youths, whose docility, and perhaps inexperience, had served me better than the most veteran valour. The French Infantry can never be too young." *

* Alison, x. p. 176.

This example proves the generous enthusiasm of youth, and is also a striking instance of the immense personal influence that can be exercised by a general who has won the love, the confidence, and the esteem of the private soldier; on the other hand, in this same year St. Cyr wrote to Napoleon, "We are determined to do all in our power; but I can answer for nothing more with such young soldiers."* But war is not all battles, which are indeed but incidents of comparatively infrequent occurrence in what is often only a long tale of exhausting marches, cold bivouacs, bad and insufficient food, exposure and hardships. It is these which the young soldier is little fitted to undergo, and it is to these that his physical strength and moral endurance will both alike succumb.

"With a young army," says Napoleon, "one can storm a formidable position, but one cannot carry through to the end a plan or a protracted design." †

Napier, with the experience of the long and severe fighting of the Peninsular War, makes the following remarks in his description of the French operations in Andalusia against the Spaniards in 1808, which resulted in the surrender of a large French army: "The young French soldiers drooped under privations and the heat of the climate; six hundred were sick, and the whole discouraged. It is at such times the worth of the veteran is felt. In battle the ardour of youth appears to shame the cool indifference of the old soldier; but when the strife is between fortune's malice and man's fortitude, between human suffering and human endurance, the veteran becomes truly formidable, while the young soldier yields to despair." ‡ † "The first quality in a soldier is manliness in sustaining fatigue and privations—valour comes only second." §

* Alison, xi. p. 8. † "Pensées de Napoléon," p. 55.
‡ Napier, i. p. 75. De Marbot corroborates Napier.
§ "Maximes de Guerre de Napoléon," lviii.

But even in battle, it may be questioned whether the eagerness and dash of the young soldier will compensate for the steadiness and determination of the veteran.* We have the example of Napoleon, in 1813, taking the utmost pains to leaven the masses of young conscripts, who were drafted into the ranks at this period, with a seasoning of old soldiers drawn from the fortresses of the Rhine, and from the armies in the Peninsula. His formations for attack, too, which continually increased in denseness as the age and quality of his troops decreased, were forced upon him, costly to life as they were, by the knowledge that the very young soldiers who composed his battalions in his later campaigns could not be trusted in more extended order. These heavy columns often indeed ploughed their way to victory, but the carnage in them was always terribly demoralizing, and was endured because the deployment of such raw troops was practically impossible.

"One must have witnessed," says Clausewitz, and he did witness, "the firmness of one of those masses taught and led by Buonaparte, under the heaviest and most unintermittent cannonade, in order to understand of what troops, hardened by long practice in the field of danger, can do, when by a career of victory they have reached the noble principle of demanding from themselves their utmost efforts. In pure conception no one would believe it. On the other hand, it is well known that there are troops in the service of European powers at the present moment who could easily be dispersed by a few cannon shots." †

"We must encourage, by every means possible, the soldiers to remain with the colours; this can easily be done if we show a great esteem for the old soldiers. It would also be necessary

* See p. 123, where it is stated that enthusiasm may be but as "burning straw."

† Clausewitz, p. 80.

to increase the pay in proportion to the years of service, because it is a great injustice not to pay better a veteran than a recruit.* Montecuculli expressed the same ideas, and the author of "Notes des Maximes" had no faith in the *levées en masse* of very short service men to resist invasion. The Franco-German war of 1870–71 proved the soundness of his views.

We may pass now to a few remarks on the subject of sanitation in connection with armies in the field. The bullets and bayonets of the enemy may claim their thousands; but, during the course of a campaign, it is certain that sickness and disease will carry off their tens of thousands, unless the medical arrangements are good, the staff sufficient, and sanitary rules and regulations enforced in the strictest manner. As it is only of late years that civil communities have seriously attended to the laws of health, it is not surprising that commanders of armies have paid but little attention to sanitation, and yet its neglect has caused armies to dissolve and disappear like melting snow.

"No man," writes Lord Wolseley, "can be a truly great general who is ignorant of the great laws upon which sanitary science is based. One of the greatest leaders of men was Moses, and it is curious as well as instructive to read in Holy Writ the laws he enacted for the sanitation of his great camps. If we do not take care of the health of our men we shall never be able to bring them 'smiling to the post,' and unless they go into battle laughing with health and the good spirits which follow upon good digestion, we must not expect great things from them."

Von der Goltz says, "The conditions of health in the German army in France were quite favourable; no dangerous pestilence broke out; and yet during the course of the war

* "Maximes de Guerre de Napoléon," lx.

400,000 sick, besides the 100,000 wounded, were obliged to have recourse to the hospitals." † The Germans estimate that the loss of men in a year's campaign amount to 40 per cent. in the infantry; 20 per cent. in the cavalry, artillery, and engineers.*

But nothing gives a more vivid idea of the consequences of neglect of sanitary principles on the one hand, and the benefits to be derived from attention to them, on the other, than the history of what happened in the Crimea, as related by Kinglake: "The summary states that the land-service troops sent out by France to the East, from the beginning of the war to its end, were 309,268; and that the losses sustained by the French in men who were either killed, or who died from sickness or wounds, or else disappeared, were 95,615. Within the whole period of twenty months, which began in November, 1854, and ended in June, 1856, the ambulances of the French received patients affected with scurvy—with palpable recognized scurvy—to the number of 23,250! And none must suppose that the malady smote only those twenty-three thousand who were labelled as men seized with scurvy; for it is certain that, of the other and yet more numerous thousands laid low by other complaints, a large proportion were men whose diseases had either been caused, or else in no small measure aggravated by the presence of the scorbutic taint.

"On the last day of February our army, out of a mean strength of 30,919 for the month, had lying in hospital no less than 13,608 men; and even that immense number is utterly insufficient to measure the evil which is partly disclosed." Between the beginning of November and the 28th of February, 8898 men died in hospital.

"Of the maladies causing 48,742 admissions into hospital,

* Furze, "Lines of Communications," p. 4.

nearly three-fourths were of the kind which science ranks as 'Zymotic,' and declares to be, in some sense, 'preventable.' During a period of only seven months, from the 1st of October, 1854, to the end of April, 1855, and out of an average strength of only 28,939, there perished in our hospitals, or on board our invalid transport ships, 11,652 men, of whom 10,053 died from sickness alone; and of the maladies causing all this mortality, the proportion which ranges under the head of 'Zymotic' was transcendently great—so great, indeed, that Science in some of her moods has computed it at even nine-tenths."

Now let us see the effect of the visit of the Sanitary Commissioners to our Levantine hospitals. "Then came on a change which, if it had only been preceded by mummery instead of ventilation and drainage and pure water supply, would have easily passed for a miracle. Down went the rate of mortality. Having already gone down from the terrible February rate of 42 per cent. to 31, it descended in the next fortnight to 14; in the next twenty days to 10; in the next, to 5; in the next, to 4; and finally, in the next twenty days—days ending on the 30th of June, 1855—to scarce more than 2; a rate so low as to be touching the very goal for which sanguine toilers were striving, because brought down to a level with the rate of mortality in our military hospitals at home." *

"INDIRECT WAR LOSSES.—During the Crimean campaign of one year and a half, 341,000 men were buried in the district of Taurida, which includes the Crimea. The Russians lost 170,000 soldiers; the English, French, and Turks, 156,000; and there were 15,000 Tartar victims. Of this total, 324,800 were interred in the Crimea, including 210,000 in the neighbourhood of Sebastopol. Those killed in battle

* Kinglake, vol. vii.

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